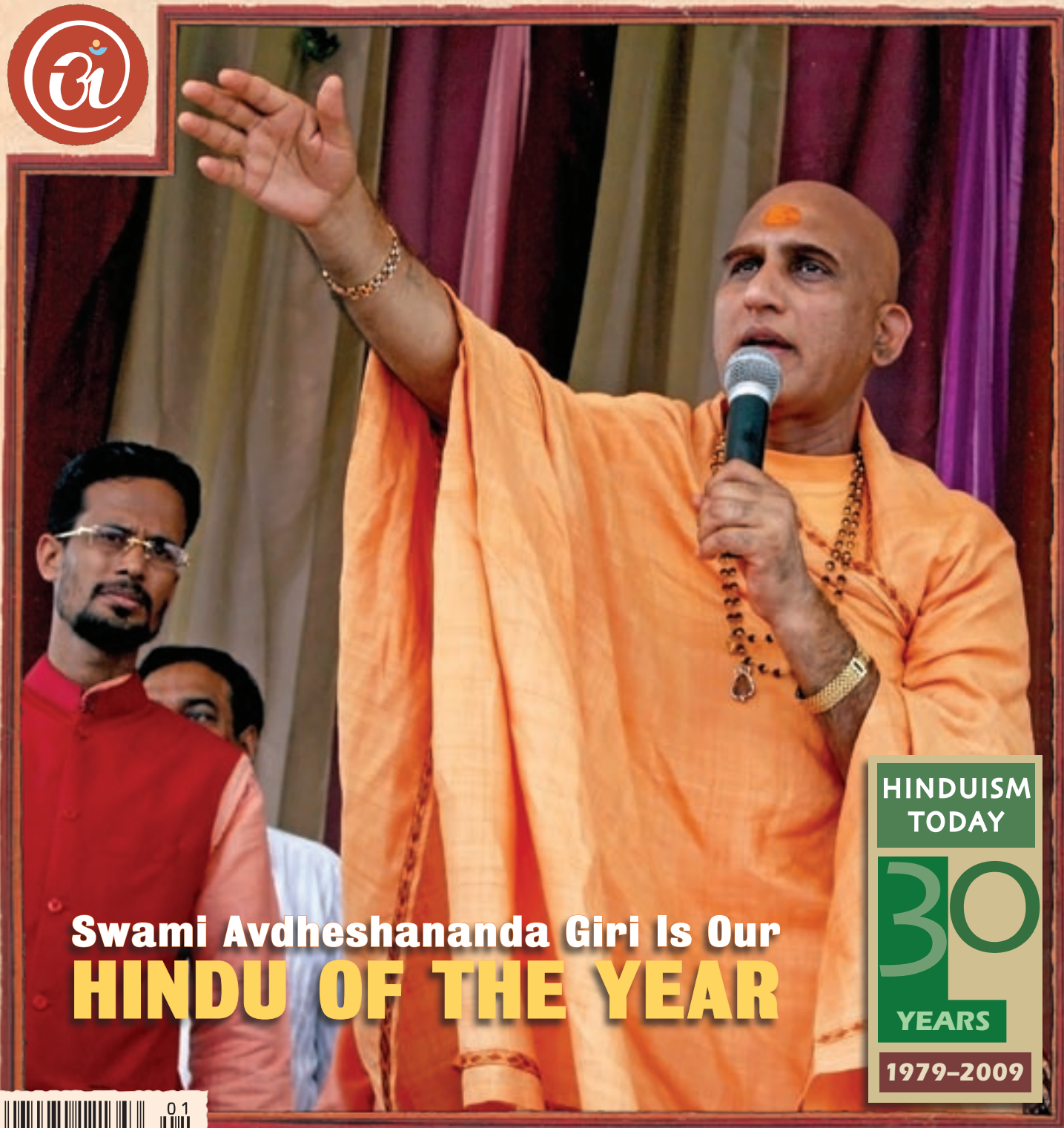


HINDUISM

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Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



COVER: Swami Avdeshananda leads hundreds of thousands of sadhus of the Juna Akhara, page 18. (above) The principles of Positive Discipline help raise secure, happy, respectful, competent children with a strong sense of belonging, page 37.

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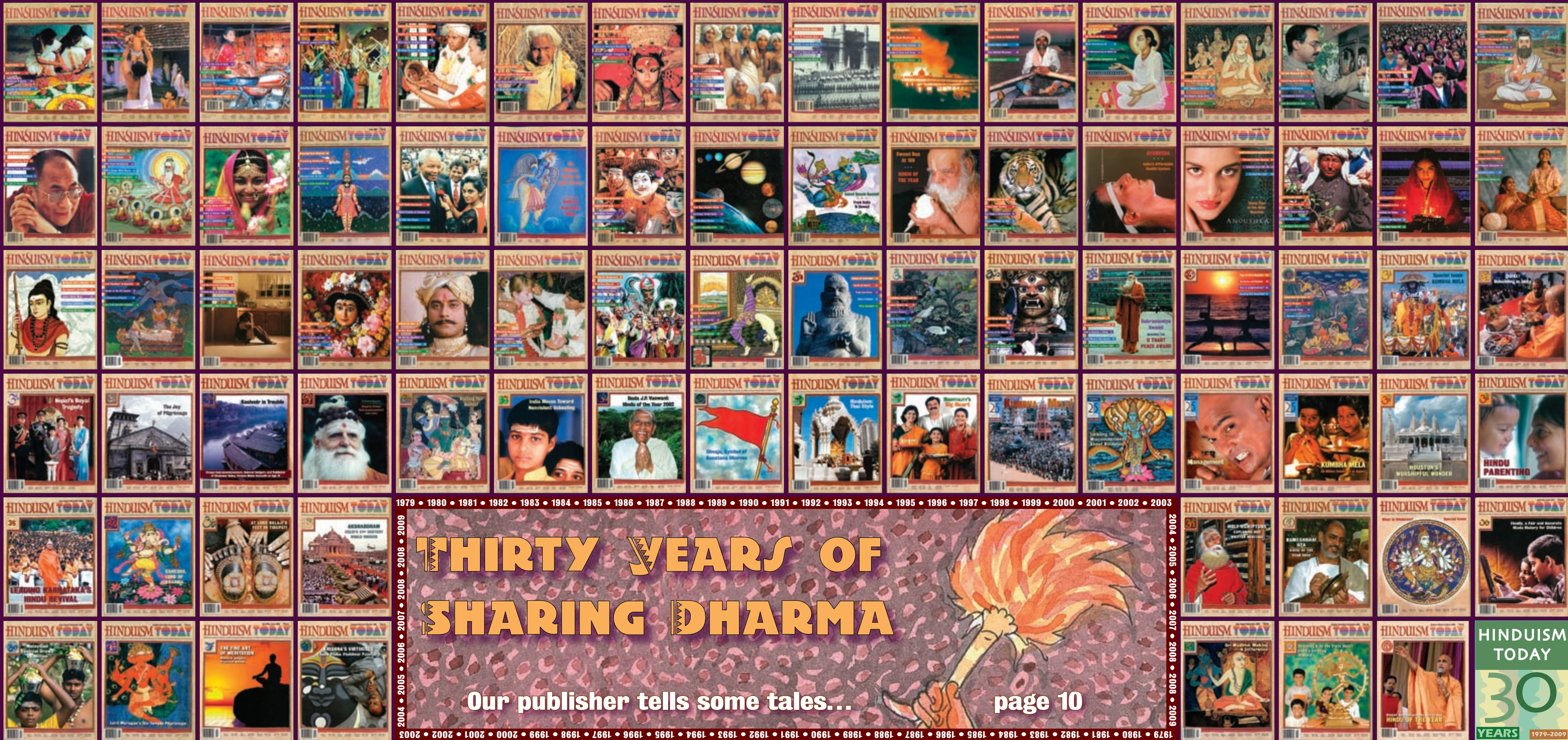


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Welcome

TO HINDUISM TODAY'S DIGITAL EDITION!

I am pleased to welcome you to the free digital edition of Hinduism Today magazine. It is the fulfillment of a vision held by my Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, to bring the magazine's profound Hindu teachings to the widest possible audience. The text of each issue has long been available on the Web, right back to 1979, but without the photographs and art. Now you have here the entire contents of the printed edition, with all photos and art. Plus, it is interactive—every link is live; click and you go to a web page. You can participate in the magazine in a number of ways, accessed through buttons on the right. And you can help support this free edition in two ways: make an online contribution (even a small one); patronize our specialized advertisers. Explore the resources here, enjoy our latest edition and e-mail us if you are inspired.

Bodhinatha Veylanawami

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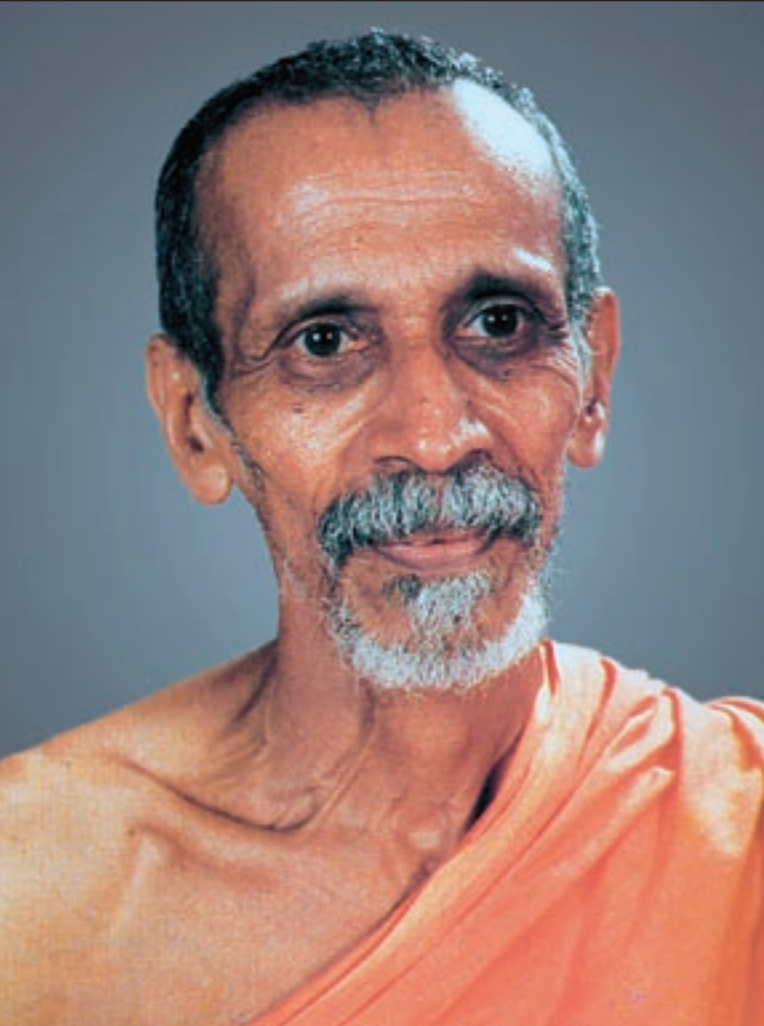
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His Holiness, Swami Chidananda Saraswati was a paragon of monasticism, a modern-day saint who inspired tens of thousands

INDIA A Great Soul Moves On

SWAMI CHIDANANDA SARASWATI attained Mahasamadhi on August 28, 2008, at the age of 92. Given his frail health, his passing was not unexpected. Swami had been a monk since 1949 and the president of the Divine Life Society (DLS) since 1963. He was a direct disciple of Swami Sivananda, the founder of DLS. Beyond his position as a world leader, Swami lived his life at a transcendent level of purity, austerity, humility, simplicity and selfless service. He struck a deep spiritual chord in everyone he met and was deemed a living saint by all. He received HINDUISM TODAY's Hindu Renaissance award as Hindu of the Year in 1999.

True to his principles to the

end, he left written instructions (see www.sivanandaonline.org) that his body was to be unceremoniously disposed of within three hours in the nearest river (which was the Ganges) following the ancient tradition of the Shankaracharya Order of sannyasins.

He was ever urging his listeners to live the divine life, saying, "To enter into the spiritual life is a rare blessedness, it is a great good. To take it seriously and engage in active spiritual sadhana is a second blessedness and a still greater good. But to persevere in the spiritual life, to be ever progressive and ceaseless in one's spiritual life, is the greatest good, the crowning blessedness."

On September 28, 2008, His Holiness, Sri Swami Vimalananda, 76, a senior monk of the Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, was elected as the new Chairman and ex-officio President of the Divine Life Trust Society.

GLOBAL DHARMA

BALI

Spectacular Cremation

IT WAS THE MOST SPECTACULAR royal funeral in Bali in at least three decades. On the auspicious day of July 15, 2008, in a roar of orange flames, the body of Agung Suyasa, who had died in March, 2008, head of the royal family of Ubud, and two members of his extended family were reduced to their earthly elements in a mass cremation that included 68 commoners. In a Balinese tradition, the bodies of the commoners had been

kept to join Suyasa's cremation. Some had been buried or mummified for months or even years, awaiting the auspicious occasion of a royal cremation. Although cremated at the same time, the pyres of the commoners were in a separate location.

According to Balinese belief, the soul can return to inhabit a new being—generally a member of the same family—only after it has been freed through cremation. "None of us is brand new," said Raka Kerthyasa, the younger half-brother of Suyasa, who is now the guardian of the ancient but symbolic royal family and who oversaw the cremation.

"We are part of the cycle of life."



Balinese joyously celebrate the fiery liberation from the mortal coil of three members of the royal family and 68 souls of the common people

CANADA

Toronto Rites Growing

CANADA'S PROVINCE OF Ontario now has the largest Sri Lankan diaspora in the world. The 2008 annual chariot festival of Toronto's Sri Varasithi Vinaayagar temple drew a crowd of 15,000. Sri Lankan temple officials and devotees pride themselves on conducting high-standard pujas and festivals. They have carried this tradition to lands far and wide. For the annual rites, the temple hired priests from India, nagaswaram (temple horn) players and 12 temple drummers, plus an elephant from the local zoo.

While their homeland continues to sink under ruinous

warfare, Sri Lankan Hindus here are moving forward. Fifteen-year-old Vignesh Markandu writes: "I have been praying at Sri Varasithi Vinaayagar Hindu temple since the year 2001. I have become very devoted to Lord Ganesha, Who has become indispensable in my life. There are no cultural/age difference in this temple. It has a balanced blend of Hindu youths, adults and seniors. Although the temple is based on South Indian rituals and language, it is becoming a multicultural, multiethnic center. The last time I went to the annual festival I saw Caucasians and many Chinese. Everyone is accepted."

"Recently the temple and priests have begun publishing



The Sri Lankan community sets high standards for Hindu rites in Canada, where its festivals continue to grow in size, grandeur and public recognition

materials and explaining things in English, and the youth are paying more attention. The temple also has a school for youth and programs for seniors. The priests here do all the ceremonies according to the traditional

principals. This temple is truly an example of opulent South Indian Hindu culture. Sri Varasithi Vinaayagar is no ordinary temple. It seems to have been unearthed in Jaffna and brought to Toronto."

USA

Woman Priest Fills Shortage

WITH OVER 3 MILLION HINDUS in the US and Canada, attending more than 700 temples and mandirs, there is a growing shortage of priests to perform the necessary rites in temples and in homes. Stepping in to fill the gap is Shashi Tandon, 68, a retired teacher. She and a few other women in

America are learning the sacred rites out of necessity. Male brahmin priests once held a prestigious position in Hindu society. But today educated brahmins are taking up secular work and looking down on the priesthood as a less sophisticated and less lucrative vocation.

When facing resistance from conservatives, Tandon says, "Can you tell me who gave birth to you? The mother is the true priest. She is the true teacher, the first teacher of the child."



Shreeya, a farmer's daughter from the town of Bhaktapur, met all tests and had the 32 physical attributes to become the Living Goddess

NEPAL

Maoists Keep The Goddess

TO THE SURPRISE OF SOME, THE new Communist, allegedly atheist, government of Nepal has chosen a new Kumari, the living incarnation of Goddess Kali and protectress of the state. Formerly chosen by the King's royal priest, the selection was made under the auspices of the

state-run Trust Corporation that oversees the country's cultural matters. Her selection from a Buddhist Shakya-Newar family was performed in accordance with tradition, after consultation with astrologers. Previously her horoscope had to be compatible with that of the King. How this mandate was fulfilled after the abolition of the monarchy is not known, but it was encouraging for Hindus to note that under the new government, this sacred tradition was not discarded.



Pandita Tandon performs the wedding of her grandson in Chicago



Neo-nazis protest mosques, synagogues and temples

GERMANY

Protesting Places of Faith

GERMANY'S RADICAL RIGHT-wing party, the neo-nazi National Democratic Party (NPD), is openly racist, anti-semetic and against minorities of all kinds. Their membership of 7500 is raising alarms and controversy in Germany and Europe.

In August, 2008, displaying a red flag (see photo) previously made for an anti-mosque

protest, 155 NPD demonstrated against plans to build two Hindu temples—a Sri Ganesha temple in Hasenheide and a Murugan temple in Blaschkoallee. Meanwhile thousands of anti-fascist Germans protested against the NPD, taking the side of Hindus, saying that "Berlin is not brown [the Nazi color], it is multi-colored!"

BRIEFLY...

US HINDUS ARE POSSIBLY marrying fewer Christians and Muslims than has been thought. Informal community assessments have put the rate of marrying "out" at 50% to as high as 90%. Dr. Dilip Amin (dilipamin@yahoo.com) did an analysis of Macy's extensive on-line marriage registry and found lower rates. For example, 170 of 494 Patels, 34%, married partners of Abrahmic religions. While interfaith marriages among "dharmic religions" (Hindus, Sikhs, Jains) are historically common in India, intermarriage between dharmic and Abrahmic religions can be cause for concern, as both Islam and Catholicism require children to be raised in those faiths.

AN EU-COMMISSIONED STUDY

has found that the global economy is losing more money every year from the disap-

pearance of forests than it has in the recent banking crisis. The total lost value of forest "services"—providing clean water and absorbing carbon dioxide—the study estimates to be between \$2 trillion and \$5 trillion annually. While Wall Street lost some \$1-\$1.5 trillion in its crisis, this \$2-\$5 trillion loss recurs year after year.

SRI RANGAM TEMPLE AUTHORITIES near Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, have announced a decision to demand rent from the 3,600 families who live and own shops on 98 acres of land that was granted to the temple by various Maharajas and later ratified by the British. Such lands were given to temples to provide an endowment. But in recent decades tenants have not paid and left-wing courts sided against the temples, leaving the temples with little income.

CHINA

US Hindu Olympian

TEXAS HINDUS WERE JUBILANT on August, 12, 2008, watching Raj Bhavsar, a 27-year-old artistic gymnast, earn a bronze medal as a member of the 2008 US Olympic Team, becoming the third Indian-American ever to win a medal at the Olympics, after Mohini Bhardwaj and Alexi Grewal.

Girish Naik, president of Hindus of Greater Houston, said, "Hindus of Greater Houston would like to congratulate our own Raj Bhavsar of Houston on his accomplishment at the Olympics. Hindus are great leaders in many fields in the US, but we are lacking in sports. Today Bhavsar has filled the void. He is someone our youth can look up to." After returning from China, Raj was honored at an



Raj Bhavsar executes the iron cross on the rings in Beijing

August 30th Janmashtami celebration in Houston.

THE NETHERLANDS' HINDU

Education Foundation opened its fourth primary school in August, 2008, in Almere. The Shri Ganesha school has 35 students and is expected to grow to 200. It is the sixth Hindu school in the country.

MORE THAN 100 SCHOOLS IN 26

states use yoga in the classroom to relieve stress, says New York state Board of Education President Julie Reagan. But after Christian parents objected to teaching yoga in classrooms at the Massena, N.Y., high school, a compromise was reached to allow an after school yoga program but not to use the word *yoga*. Instead it is called "Raiders Relaxation."

ORISSA VHP LEADER, SWAMI

Lakshmanananda Saraswati, and several devotees were brutally murdered in October, 2008, sparking protests and violence by Hindus across the state that left dozens of Christians dead and churches

damaged or destroyed. Initial reports blamed Maoist rebels for the murders, but subsequent police investigation uncovered a link between Maoists and young Christian militants who were attempting to stop the swami's successful reconversion campaigns. The Police Inspector General said, "Maoists were given money to train certain youths to eliminate Saraswati." The conflict is compounded by tribal rivalries.

THE HINDU MANDIR EXECUTIVE

Committee met in Romulus, Michigan, September 30, bringing together representatives of 113 temples and Hindu organizations from 25 states, Canada and the Caribbean. Swami Dayananda Saraswati encouraged the group to make their temples halls of learning for the youth, as well as altars of worship, in serving America's 2.5 million Hindus. The group promised to "work as a family to restore and further the dignity of Hindu identity."



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred Vedas and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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IN MY OPINION

Eastern Children in a Western World

A look at preserving our traditional values for the text-messaging, Facebook generation

BY MEHDI RIZVI

IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA in the 1950s and 60s came mostly from Europe. Now the pattern has changed; according to the 2006 census, 583 percent of the last five years' 1.11 million immigrants came from Asia and the Middle East. These immigrants came with their customs, traditions and religious and social values, and their children are trained in Canadian schools to practice the qualities of honesty, mutual respect and tolerance to become good citizens.

The blending of the noble values of the two cultures gives them the best of both worlds. Canada has one of the planet's best educational systems, and parents feel fortunate that their children have the opportunity to get a good education. On the other hand, children also are more susceptible to unfiltered cultural influences. The parental generation of Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants finds itself in a rare social predicament: the very quick assimilation of their children into a free society and, correspondingly, the fading of their own values.

Rearing Eastern children in the Western world is a great challenge—rather like growing a tropical plant in the Arctic—and requires determination, maturity and tolerance. Many immigrant parents and their children have diametrically opposed views on important family and social issues, such as dress codes, moving out before marriage and mixed marriages. Many immigrant parents are careful about dietary practices—kosher, halal, vegetarian—but their children may not be. Nor can it be easy for Sikh parents to welcome a clean-shaven, kirpan- and turban-less young man into the family, or for Muslim parents to be pleased with their daughter's Jewish boyfriend, or vice versa. They think these cross-cultural matches reduce the longevity of a partnership and subsequently produce more broken families, single parents and neglected children. A nuclear family needs common values to survive, they believe.



Asian and Middle Eastern immigrant parents do not generally accept sleepovers at a friend's house, late nights out and returning home with the rising sun the next morning. They are concerned about shootings, drug- and sex-related crimes and teenage pregnancies. Canadian parents are no happier with these phenomena and realize that too much free-

dom and the absence of parental and social control are among the main causes.

Is morality irrelevant to any generation or cultural group? Can't we design decent parameters for moral and social practices? Aren't our intellectuals and policy-makers aware of the social implications of teenage pregnancies and fatherless children?

Immigrant parents tend to believe that young people are not mature enough to know what really is important in life and want to shelter their children from certain influences. But the children feel their parents do not understand their problems; parents always seem to be telling old stories from the frozen past in a distant land.

Facebook, cellphones and text messaging have opened new, unsupervised social circles for children. A child who sends a text message or chats online while a parent sits nearby is actually disconnected from the family. Parents are ignoring this.

Every generation has its own place on the map of history, and it is important for both parents and children to see where they are. As a society, we need to help them find safe passage between the two points. Boundaries need to be redefined, without prejudice, to weave a new social fabric and maintain a virtuous balance between the diverse concepts of freedom, dignity and morality, with comfort zones for all age groups, genders and cultural traditions. This will help build a better future for our coming generations.

MEHDI RIZVI is an industrial chemist. His editorial appeared in The Toronto Star, June 10, 2008. E-mail: smehdir@yahoo.com

Thirty Years Serving Dharma

We celebrate HINDUISM TODAY's productive past, introduce a few design changes and explore our impact and digital innovations

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

THE IDEA FOR HINDUISM TODAY MAGAZINE CAME as an inspiration to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in the late 1970s during his extensive global travels to visit hundreds of far-flung Hindu communities. His own words tell the tale: "I made several world tours, visiting Mauritius, Sri Lanka, India, South Africa, Malaysia, England and other countries where I spoke to hundreds of thousands of people. I discovered that Hindus in each country were totally unaware of, or did not care about, what was happening within the realms of their religion in other places in the world. Out of these tours came the mission of HINDUISM TODAY, to strengthen all the many diverse expressions of Hindu spirituality and to give them a single, combined voice, because everywhere else their voices were individualized. Through this magazine, we delineated the boundaries of Hinduism and placed this great and oldest religion alongside Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and the many other religions of the world. We showed the strength of Hinduism in articles by top writers and some of the finest photographers in the world, such as for our articles on the Kumbha Mela, the largest human gathering ever on planet Earth. We have been able to bring forward and honor a 'Hindu of the Year' and to listen to the wisdom of swamis and swaminis in our 'Minister's Message.'"

Like Hinduism itself, the message of HINDUISM TODAY, as articulated by Gurudeva and the editors, has not changed over its thirty-year existence. However, the form the message has taken continues to evolve and improve with computer technology. Our first black-and-white newspaper issue when placed next to our latest four-color magazine shows a quantum leap in the use of computer technology. And certainly one of the reasons the magazine is greatly appreciated by our readers is its world-class graphic excellence. Readers feel that the magazine's aesthetic craftsmanship portrays well the richness and grandeur of the Hindu religion.

Our editorial staff is constantly finding ways to make improvements. In July of 1986 we moved the entire production platform from process cameras and light tables to that inventive little device, the Macintosh. In December of 1996 we changed from being a broadsheet newspaper to a full-color magazine. In 1998 we were among the first in the industry to adopt computer-to-plate technology, bypassing the old film-to-plate method. Since 2000 the image quality has skyrocketed as photographers have migrated to ever-evolving digital cameras. In 2006 we collaborated with our printer in Missouri to better control the color calibration and correction standards.

In celebration of our 30th year, the editors have made some small but significant changes. You will notice the cover type and art have been adjusted for better readability, and the page backgrounds have



been lightened. Those who publish tend to love typography, and our team are avid typophiles. They have found a new font, called Relato, which is more distinctive and legible than the adaptation of New Caledonia, which we used since 1996. New Caledonia (used to set this one sentence) was designed in 1938 by William Addison Dwiggins of Linotype fame, whereas Relato was designed in 2005 by the contemporary Spanish typographer Eduardo Manso. Our team used some high-end tools to add diacritical marks to the font and make some kerning improvements that augmented Relato's versatile, legible and graceful presence on the

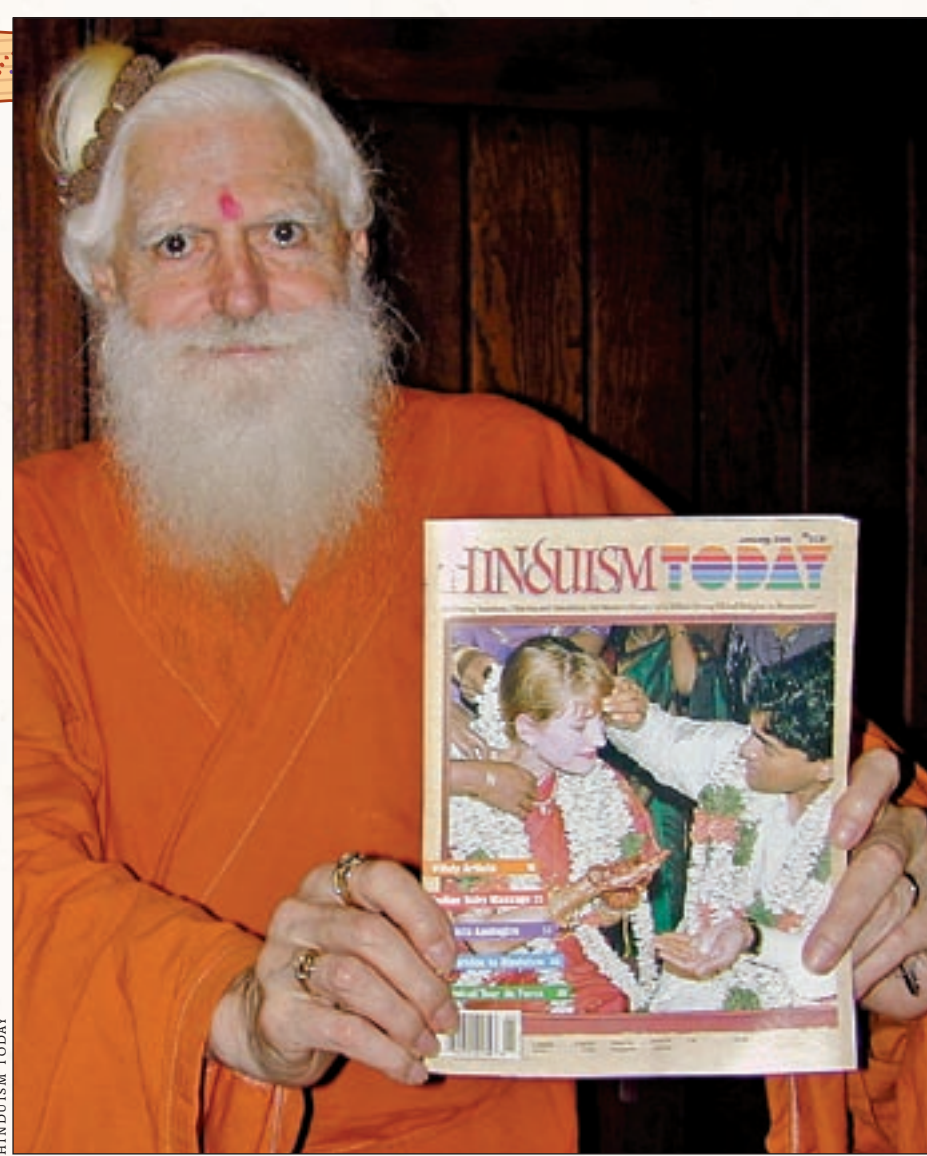
page. When we asked Eduardo to describe Relato from a designer's perspective, he waxed poetic: "Relato has a low contrast and 'muscular' structure that makes it useful for setting longer text. In display sizes it has a variety of details that lend it a unique and personal expression. The formal principle of the serif, the variety of terminal strokes and the combination of curves and semi-straight lines gives Relato a more 'human' flavor. Relato is a decidedly contemporary typeface, proposing individual ideas on the design of type."

Through our type and tools, our resources and writing, we are determined to keep HINDUISM TODAY on the cutting edge of communication technology as the flagship magazine for Hinduism around the world.

Those efforts are not confined to the world of print. HINDUISM TODAY also enjoys a growing digital presence. We have an HTML archive of the magazine available on our website, going all the way back to 1979. It is an ideal resource for searching back articles, something I myself often use. In 2006 we launched our digital edition of the magazine. Using an elegant software delivery system we developed, you can download and manage all the PDF files of each edition right on your computer. We know of some readers, residing in countries where the print edition is not available, who exclusively peruse the PDF version. The digital version has additional audio and video features that enhance some of the articles.

Our latest expansion is into the realm of video and was launched in 2008 by opening a YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/hinduismtodayvideos). After each issue is sent off to the printer, our editors produce a 10-minute video summary of the major articles, and I read my Publisher's Desk article on camera. Thousands of people who have never seen this magazine are learning about Hinduism through our YouTube videos. Now and then we add recordings of presentations our editors have given at conferences, including "Reli-

HINDUISM TODAY



gion and the Media" and "The California Textbook Controversy." We produced our first major video in 2007, a three-part documentary on the amazing Thai Pusam festival in Malaysia. It still holds the record for the most views among our YouTube postings.

To extend the distribution of HINDUISM TODAY's content, we print extra copies of key Educational Insight sections as 16-page booklets that can be purchased online and easily used in Hindu religious classes. One of the most popular is "Ten Questions People Ask About Hinduism." Back in the spring of 1990, a group of teens from Chicago sent a request to HINDUISM TODAY for "official answers" to nine questions they were commonly asked by their peers. These questions had perplexed the youth themselves; and their parents had no convincing answers. HINDUISM TODAY founder Gurudeva took up the challenge and composed thoughtful answers to the nine questions. In 2004 we added a tenth dialog on caste, since that is the most relentless criticism Hinduism faces today. In the question-and-answer session of lectures I give, one or more of these questions is inevitably asked, which shows that the answers provided in this booklet continue to be useful.

In 2004 quite a furor developed around the California State Board of Education's questionable approval of material on Hinduism for its sixth grade social studies textbook. The controversy still continues in the form of an active lawsuit. Our own response to the matter was to research, design and write a model 16-page lesson on Hindu history, beliefs and practices for sixth graders, written from the Hindu point of view. It is historically sound, having been reviewed

Reaching out: Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in 2000 holding the magazine he founded to connect Hindus dispersed around the world, to give them a shared global identity, to dispel the many myths and misconceptions and to bring pride of place to the faith

by prominent Hindu historians, and acceptable in content and tone to the various denominations of the global Hindu community. It, of course, is a popular educational booklet with a distribution to date of some 35,000 copies. The first lesson covers the period from ancient times to 300ce. Lesson two of this series, published in the Oct/Nov/Dec, 2008, issue, covers the period 300 to 1100ce. Additional lessons are planned over the next few years. This is an important way that the editorial staff is reaching out to the broader community, both Hindu and non-Hindu, to present an authentic view of Hinduism that will be understood and appreciated in the West.

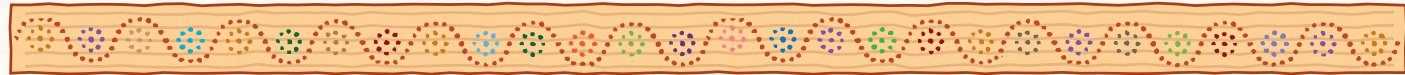
An inspiration came to me in 2007 to create a book out of HINDUISM TODAY. Specifically, I envisioned the best of our Educational Insight sections compiled into a book called *What Is Hinduism?* Approached from scratch, such a book would take a large team years to produce, especially with the level of artistry, research, patience and care that is found in each chapter. The serendipitous beauty of the project was that the necessary thousands of hours of loving attention had already gone into researching and designing its chapters over the last ten years by our talented team of writers, editors and photographers. All that was needed then, in 2007, was to gather the best features and assemble them in a way that offers a thorough yet highly readable introduction to Hinduism. Voila! In all, 46 Educational Insights comprise the book and create a user-friendly way to read them versus a pile of 46 magazines!

The book *What Is Hinduism?* has been introduced to Hindus through dozens of my lectures, highlighting the book's rich graphics and clear presentations. Thousands have attended these seminars over these last two years. The book has also been successfully used at major Hindu summer camps. The students can take the book home with them and continue to refer to it, helping them remember the teachings over the subsequent months. It is yet another way the magazine is impacting Hinduism.

HINDUISM TODAY has become a resource for mainstream America, a place where people can find authentic and reliable information on Sanatana Dharma, and our editorial team is often called upon for hard-to-find answers to questions that few other institutions seem inclined to take the time to address. Harvard University is engaged in a CD-based Pluralism Project which teaches high school children about other cultures and religions. Prof. Diana Eck, head of Harvard's religion department, invited HINDUISM TODAY to participate in the Hindu expressions. In 1997 the former editor of *Christianity Today*, Terry Muck, invited us to collaborate on a chapter of his new Doubleday book, *A Guide to Religions in America*.

We often get calls from religion editors in America, and was lauded as a solid source of Indian spirituality in a book published by John Dart of the *Los Angeles Times* called *Deities and Deadlines*. *Time Magazine* called years back to verify a story on Deepak Chopra's phenomenal success. Indeed, HINDUISM TODAY has gained a reputation for credibility, access to authentic information and a commitment to objective, unexaggerated reporting.

But that's just the beginning and doesn't explain why a select committee seeking the Hindu view on the ethics of human cloning for a report to US President Bill Clinton called our editorial offices in March of 1997 or why the Ford Foundation sponsored two of our editors to join fifty prominent religion editors in the US at a meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, or why we were asked to write a chapter on Hindu medical ethics for the Southern Texas Medical Association... you get the idea; as interesting as our past has been, we think the future is going to prove even more remarkable.



LETTERS

Love that Sari

"Jai" to those who wear the sari and the bindi, the hallmarks of the Hindu woman. In urban settings, especially among the younger generations, the sari is practically extinct. It has been replaced by the salwar-kameez or the western pants suit. The bindi is also fast vanishing in Indian cities, a stunning development of the past decade or so. There was a time when an Indian girl without a bindi was automatically considered a Muslim, Christian or Sikh. Now I find myself asking, "Is she Hindu?" and feeling disgust at the all-too-common sacrilege.

As for men, if they hurt when the women throw culture to the winds, they must first preserve it themselves. Otherwise, "For a Rama like you, there will only be a Sita like me!" will be the irrefutable argument. In the streets of Delhi or New York, the *dhoti*, *vibuthi*, etc., must see the light of day.

Some argue that it is the nature of Hinduism to adapt to changing times, that only the spiritual goal is important and not the external symbols of religion. It rather seems to me that it is the nature of Hindus to compromise our culture, slave under the culture of others and justify it all with philosophy. The external symbols are our protective fences. They protect not only us but our entire community, religion and ways of life. My thanks to HINDUISM TODAY for highlighting this point in various ways.

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I enjoyed reading the article on the sari (October/November/December, 2008). You have done a great job. You are probably not aware of the nine yard saris of the orthodox brahmin ladies, the Iyers and Iyengars of Chennai. My mother and mother-in-law both wore these. The brahmin style is the most sensuous one. When I was at the University of Michigan, snow or sunshine, I clung to my Indian traditions and always wore a sari.

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Against the Missionaries

I applaud your magazine for the article "A Fraudulent Mission" (October/November/December, 2008) by Dr. David Frawley. I am Jewish but a regular reader of HINDUISM TODAY. I work in the information technology sector in the US. A few years ago when my company started using many Indian contractors, missionary tracts aimed at Hindus started to show up in our break room. When I found them, I would throw them away. I

was embarrassed that my Indian coworkers might come to this country and be quickly exposed to the message that many Americans disrespect their religion. I am used to seeing missionary materials because I live in the Bible Belt and Christianity is the accepted norm, but I was shocked at how quickly materials aimed specifically at Hindus showed up in our area, because my city had few Hindus prior to this point. This goes to show, I think, how well-organized the missionary industry is. Everyone who does not believe in the supremacy of one religion over another must unite and stand up together against missionaries who preach that very message. We need to do a better job teaching others about what our religions have to offer—not to proselytize, but to inform. I particularly agree with the last sentence in that article, "The world desperately needs better access to India's wealth of spiritual resources." Thank you for all your efforts.

JENNIFER PLUNK
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I was upset and shocked at the outright attack on Christianity by Dr. Frawley. As Hindus, we seem to pride ourselves in the tolerance we have for other religions, yet here was a representative attacking the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Yes, many Christians do send plenty of money and manpower to India. I agree with the statement, but not the problem. What we should be asking ourselves is, "What void is Christianity filling for these converts that Hinduism is not?" It's a tough question for the prideful, but our holy books teach us to not be so arrogant. I believe that we all have been made with minds that think and make decisions. Far be it from me to look down on those who find happiness in another religion as I have found in Hinduism.

K. T. BRAY
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These missionaries from outside India have no knowledge or respect for the diversity of India. For centuries tribals have celebrated their tribal faiths in peace in a Hindu India. Now they face the prospect of losing their small faiths to a well-financed machine. This has already happened in Africa and northeast India. If we stand by and do nothing, we will certainly lose that idea that is India, a place where persecuted people, such as the Parsees, Bohras, Jews and recently the Tibetans, have found safe refuge. They did so because of our Hindu ideals and values.

It is Hinduism that says God made man a human being, but we humans have divided ourselves into Hindus, Muslims and Chris-

tians. Once we die, we are no longer humans or animals but just souls and it is these souls, regardless of religion or faith, that ascend to Rama's heaven. All good souls, even atheists, are welcome in Rama's heaven.

Christians may have a better-funded organization, but we are not entirely helpless. I call upon good Hindus to wake up and help as much as they can. With the power of the Internet, we can now influence people with just the click of a mouse. I see a lot of Hindus discussing whether Hinduism is dvaita or advaita, whether Hinduism is polytheistic or monotheistic. These discussions are important, but what is more important is to spread the values of Hinduism. Even our own young are ignorant of the glorious values that Hinduism teaches.

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Dealing with Holidays

The influence of Christianity is a problem for Hindus living abroad. Well-educated and well-heeled Indian Hindus living in the US routinely throw elaborate Christmas parties. Their children brag about who had the biggest Christmas tree and who received the most Christmas gifts. As a mother raising a child in the US, I face this problem every Christmas. I clash with my husband on the issues of bringing a Christmas tree home, buying Christmas gifts, etc., for the sake of our children so they are not left out—left out of what? A well-educated Hindu mother once chided me when I spoke against the influence of Christmas on our children. Her reply was, "It is such an innocent, happy holiday. What's wrong if our children take part in it?" Most people fail to realize the subtle influence here. We do not take part in the Muslim or Jewish holidays, so why Easter or Christmas? Hindus should look deeply into their mind set and find out the answer themselves. If parents are not careful, our next generation will be affected by the glamour and glitter of Christianity which surrounds the celebration.

VIDYA BHIDE
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✓ *Hinduism Today's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, developed the festival of "Pancha Ganapati" for Western Hindus to provide Hindu festivities for the children during this holiday time, from December 21 to 25. Google "Pancha Ganapati" for how your family can celebrate the Hindu way during the Christmas season.*

Temple Safety

The stampede at Jodhpur has come as a shock to everyone. How could the state government be so lax when thousands attend the temple every day? They should have made secure entry and exit routes for the crowds. And this follows on earlier stampedes at other temples, also the result of lax arrangements. Now we see the usual giving out of checks to the next of kin, but the same money could have been used earlier to make the temples safe.

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Responding to Missionaries

I was raised a Catholic, but never believed what the church taught. Even as a small child, I could see through the arguments that everyone needed to be baptized to go to heaven. This led to me extensively reading books concerning Buddhism and Hinduism. My three sons rejected Christianity in very short order. As a family, we have established a coping strategy to deal with proselytization attempts aimed at our children. When told they must accept Jesus, or that the Bible is the word of God, they simply respond, "I do not believe that." They are repeatedly asked if they go to church, and answer, "That's none of your business."

Now is the time for everyone to talk to their children concerning how to deal with these individuals. It is my belief that by making this a continuous topic within our home, it will make us stronger as a family and help

our children to develop a similar strategy when they become parents in the future.

RON HIGGINS
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Excellent Publication

I came to know about your magazine through the Internet a few weeks back. It is excellent in content and the presentation of Hindu views and way of life. I felt an inner urge to submit my thanks for the service you are rendering.

C. SIVARAMAN
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Inter-Religious Marriage

After reading the article "Interreligious Marriage" (July/August/September, 2008) by Dr. Dilip Amin, I would like to give my own comments. In my part of the world, Malaysia, Hindus are the third largest population group after the Malays and the Chinese. There is frequent intermarriage between Hindus, Chinese, Toaists, Sabahans, Sarawakians and Buddhists. These intermarrying couples face very few problems, religious or otherwise.

At Hindu temples in Malaysia, it is quite common to see Hindu husbands coming to pray with their "intermarried" wives, complete with Hindu attire. In Malaysia, women usually follow the religion of their husbands. Hence, the issue of conversion seldom arises. Couples believe in the concept of one God, and that all religions are good. To these inter-

marrying couples, love is all that matters.

I have been married to my Taoist Chinese wife for the last fifty years, and we never faced any religious problems. Our children speak fluent Chinese and Tamil and respect all religions. It looks like in Malaysia intermarriages are here to stay, bringing forth new and better generations.

K. THURUVAN
RASAH, SEREMBAM, MALAYSIA

Corrections

✓ *The photograph on page 20 of the October issue was by Amit Kumar. A photo on page 22 showing arati being performed was flipped. It incorrectly shows the pujari using his left hand for the worship, which would never be done.*

✓ *The article on Christian missionaries by Dr. David Frawley was drawn from a dialogue with the Catholic archbishop of Hyderabad in 1997, not 2007 as stated.*

Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

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107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351
or e-mailed to: letters@hindu.org

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

A Gift from the Heart Begets Many More

One way to send blessings 'round the world

SHAILESH TRIVEDI WAS BORN IN THE USA in 1977, and grew up with a rare advantage. His parents lovingly taught him all the Hinduism they knew and, when he was a little tot, they subscribed to HINDUISM TODAY! The magazine was part of the family—a small detail of great consequence, as it happened.

There were times when young Shailesh experienced the inevitable second-generation gloomies. "I knew the basics, attended *bhajan* and celebrated home *puja*, but there were gaps," he explains. "We lived far from any Hindu community and there was too much I did not understand. It all became a big blur. I belonged neither here nor there. I felt disconnected."

Fortunately, HINDUISM TODAY was always around and, over time, it brought in the clarity he was looking for. "Time



Sunrise on the flower farm: Shailesh and his parents among the myrtle. "The magazine helped us maintain a blissful unity of vision and continuity from past to present."

and again, I was awed, realizing what a great culture I possessed. And the magazine was always bright, light, humorous, with nothing ponderous anywhere. It was the perfect teacher, and it transformed me. I cannot

imagine my life without it." Shailesh lives in Fallbrook, California, where he owns and operates a flower farm.

Recently, he gave \$500 to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "I wanted to help bring to others what has meant so much to me. What a great cause, helping people be clear in their beliefs, know who they are and what they should do! And these treasures, more and more, HINDUISM TODAY gives away free, resources on their website and their digital edition, for example. I find it inspiring to give so they may give more. My little gift, through their hands, becomes a great big gift to the world."

Please consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund so that your magazine may continue to give, and give and give.

Contact us to receive our Production Fund e-newsletter: 808-822-3012 ext.244
hhe@hindu.org
www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/

QUOTES & QUIPS

Waste not a minute. Be bold.
Realize the Truth, here and now!

Swami Sivananda (1887–1963), founder of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

You have been born in this world as a human being to worship God; therefore try to acquire love for His Lotus Feet. Why do you trouble yourself to know a hundred other things? What will you gain by discussing philosophy? **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** (1836–1886)

For our cause I too am prepared to die, but for no cause, my friend, will I be prepared to kill. **Mahatma Gandhi** (1869–1948), Indian spiritual leader

In a day when you don't come across any problems, you can be sure that you are traveling in the wrong path. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863–1902), disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

Not until we see the richness of the Hindu spirituality can we understand India. **Lin Yutang** (1895–1976), Chinese writer

Faith is like electricity. You can't see it, but you can see its light shining on you. *Anonymous*

The highest form of grace is silence. **Swami Chinmayananda** (1916–1922), founder of the Chinmaya Mission

Water is sufficient to cleanse the body, but truthfulness alone can purify the mind. **Tirukkural** 298

Truth is not only Eternal but also unlimited and infinite. Sanatana Dharma is very simple and natural because it is based

on the Laws of Nature. **Swami Rama Tirtha** (1873–1906), one of the first sannyasins to bring Hinduism to America

Before I came on this earth, I was the same. As a little girl, I was the same. I grew into womanhood, but still I was the same. And, even now, I am the same. Though the dance of creation will ever change around me in the hall of eternity, I shall be the same. **Sri Anandamayi Ma**, (1896–1982), Bengali mystic

The body of Benjamin Franklin lies here, made food for worms like an old and worn book. Yet it will appear once more, in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by its Author. *Epitaph on the grave of Benjamin Franklin* (1706–1790), American philosopher and politician, who believed in reincarnation

Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else. *Anonymous*

I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought of yourselves or your properties, but to care about the improvement of the soul. **Socrates**, (470–399 bce) Greek philosopher

The first day a guest, the second day a guest, the third day a guest, the fourth day a calamity. *Indian proverb*

Do not be proud of wealth, people, relations and friends, or youth. All these are snatched by time in the blink of an eye. Giving up this illusory world, know and attain the Supreme. **Adi Shankara**, 9th century Indian philosopher and saint

The present is the result of past action. Man is the architect of his future. **Satguru Yogaswami** (1872–1964), Sri Lanka's most revered contemporary mystic

Frank and Ernest

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An equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God. **Srinivas Ramanujan** (1887–1920), Indian mathematician

Wake up and find out eventually who you really are. In our culture of course, they'll say you're crazy or you're blasphemous, and they'll either put you in jail or in the nut house (which is the same thing). But if you wake up in India and tell your friends and relations, "My goodness, I've just discovered that I'm God," they'll laugh and say, "Oh, congratulations, at last you found out." **Alan Watts**, (1915–1973), English philosopher and expert in comparative religion

I think I get enough exercise just pushing my luck. *Anonymous*

Sometimes I wish karma could talk... That would take a lot of the guesswork out of what we do. **Randy Hickey**, TV character, brother of the eponymous star in the American show "My Name Is Earl"

Few women admit their age, but fewer men act it. *Anonymous*

Surrender can never be regarded as complete so long as the devotee wants this or that from the Lord. True surrender is the love of God for the sake of love and nothing else, not even

for the sake of salvation. Love Him unconditionally. **Sri Ramana Maharishi** (1879–1950), South Indian mystic

Each Hindu lineage has within it an inner sound, a *nada* of a different velocity, varied in pitch and depth. This is *sampradaya*. This is *parampara*. This is *nada-nadi* shakti. This is Hindu mysticism. To hear this very high-pitched eee sound is your first siddhi. It will bring many benefits into your life, smooth out the karmas, keep you inspired and on the subtle path, strengthening your personal force field and that of all those connected to you. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY

DID YOU KNOW?

Hindu Gods in Japan

ALTHOUGH HINDUISM HAS FEW followers in Japan, still it had a significant, but indirect role in the formation of Japanese culture. Many Buddhist beliefs and traditions come from Hinduism, spread to Japan from China from the 6th century. Several Hindu Gods are revered in the land of the rising sun.

Japan's very popular "Seven Gods of Fortune" are partly originated from Hindu deities, including Benzaiten (Sarasvati), Bishamon (Kubera), and Daikoku (Mahakala). Benzaiten is specially popular. A text praising Benzaiten, called *The Sutra of Golden Light*, became an important scripture in Japan used to support the Imperial claim to power and divinity. She is also part of the popular *Lotus Sutra*.

The Hindu god of death, Yama, is known as Enma. Garuda, the

vahana of Vishnu, is known as the Karura. The Japanese *tennin* originated from the Hindu *apsaras*.

In a massive temple at the Futako Tamagawa area of Tokyo, Lord Ganesha is displayed so many times that He even outnumbers the Buddha!

Through Buddhism, many of the facets of Hindu culture which have influenced Japan have also influenced Chinese culture.

SEAN WILSON - WIKIMEDIA



BASICS OF HINDUISM

Hinduism's Second Pillar: Scriptures

THE THREE PILLARS OF HINDUISM ARE the temples, the scriptures and the satgurus. They sustain and preserve the ancient wisdom. If any two were to disappear, Hinduism would come back from the third, as perfect as it ever was.

Here we describe the second pillar, Hindu scriptures. The holiest and most revered are the *Vedas* and *Agamas*, called *shruti* (that which is "heard"), both revealed by God through clairaudient and clairvoyant rishis centuries and millennia ago.

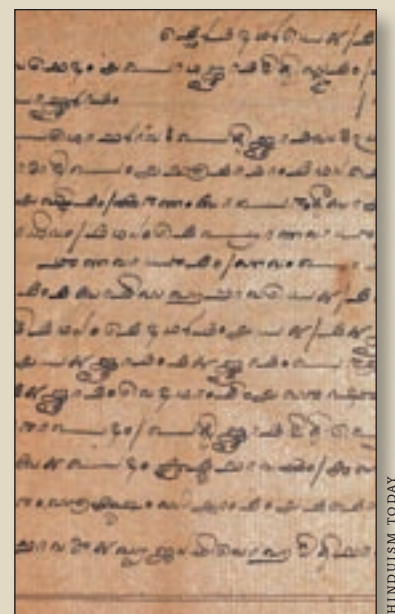
The *Vedas* and *Agamas* hold eternal truths. They are Hinduism's primary and most authoritative scriptures, expounding life's sacredness and man's purpose on the planet. They were memorized and orally conveyed from generation to generation, then finally written down in the last few

millennia. The subtly symbolic language of Hindu *shruti* is lyrical and lofty, imparting religious practice, rules and doctrine.

The *Vedas* extol and invoke a multiplicity of Gods through elaborate fire rituals called *yajna*. The *Agamas* are specific to each Hindu denomination, centering around a single Deity and His worship in sanctified temples and shrines.

The array of works known as *smriti* (that which is "remembered") is equally vast. The most prominent and widely celebrated are the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Devotees also revere the many *Puranas*, which contain Hindu mythology.

Moreover, through the ages God-realized souls have poured forth volumes that reveal the wonders of yoga and offer passionate hymns of devotion.



HINDUISM TODAY

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Responses to Lesson 1

We agree to promote within the US school system the [history lesson] published by Hinduism Today... and to enhance the dissemination of it. —**Resolution 3**
Hindu Mandir Executives Conference, Aug. 12, 2007

...correct, authentic and definitely better than I have seen in any school textbook. —**Shiva G. Bajpai**, Ph.D
Director, Center for Asian Studies, California State University

I wholeheartedly and unequivocally recommend its use in all official textbooks.

—**Swami Chidanand Saraswati**,
Founder-Chairman, India Heritage
Research Foundation, Rishikesh

I could imagine myself recommending this lesson for my college students. —**Jeffery D. Long**, Ph.D, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College, PA, USA

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CHAPTER 2

Hindu India: 300 to 1100 ce

During these eight centuries, empires, religion, commerce, science, technology, literature and art flourished in India. In years vitally important to Hindus to this day, the Hindu faith was advanced by temple building, the Bhakti Movement, holy texts and great philosophers, saints and sages.

Note to Students, Parents and Teachers

This Educational Insight is the second chapter in our series on Hindu history intended for use in US primary schools. During this period, India was the richest region of the world and one of the most populous. Great agricultural abundance, plus plentiful natural resources, were key to the region's prosperity. India lay in the center of the world's ancient trade routes. Merchants sent spices, cotton, sugar and exotic items east to China and west to Europe. Hindu religion and culture and the Sanskrit language linked all of India. Great scientific discoveries as well as major religious movements came out of this advanced and stable society. This lesson was written and designed by the editorial

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

This is an 8th century South Indian bronze of Supreme God Shiva as Nataraja. This divine dance depicts His five cosmic powers of creation, preservation, dissolution, veiling grace and revealing grace.

staff of HINDUISM TODAY in collaboration with Dr. Shiva Bajpai, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University, Northridge. Academic reviewers: Dr. Klaus Klostermaier, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Manitoba; Dr. Jeffrey D. Long, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College; Dr. Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Department of Religion, University of Florida; Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College; Dr. T.S. Rukmani, Professor and Chair in Hindu Studies, Concordia University. Research Assistant: Justin Stein, MA candidate at the University of Hawaii and former middle school teacher in New York.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2005 HINDUISM TODAY 11

[illegible][illegible]

CHAPTER 1

Hinduism From Ancient Times

As the world's oldest major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism have shaped the spiritual and cultural landscape of South and East Asia. Hinduism, with its roots in the Indus Valley civilization, is a complex of beliefs and practices that have evolved over thousands of years. It is characterized by a deep reverence for the divine, a belief in the cycle of rebirth (samsara), and a path of spiritual liberation (moksha). The religion is deeply intertwined with the natural world, with many deities and rituals associated with the elements of nature. This chapter explores the rich history and diverse traditions of Hinduism, from its ancient origins to its modern-day practices.

Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala
The Hindu deity Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala is depicted in a yellow dhoti and a tall, ornate crown, holding a mace and a conch shell.

Roots in the Indus Valley and Beyond
The origins of Hinduism are deeply rooted in the ancient Indus Valley civilization, which flourished in the region of modern-day Pakistan and India. The Indus Valley people, who lived around 3300-1300 BCE, practiced a form of monotheism or polytheism that included a supreme deity, possibly Shiva or Vishnu. The Indus Valley civilization was a highly advanced society, with a complex system of writing and a sophisticated urban planning. The roots of Hinduism are also found in the Vedic period, which began around 1500 BCE. The Vedas, a collection of sacred texts, were composed by the Vedic sages and are the foundation of Hindu philosophy and practice. The Vedas are divided into four main branches: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. The Rigveda is the oldest and most important of the Vedas, containing hymns dedicated to various deities. The Yajurveda is a collection of rituals and sacrifices, the Samaveda is a collection of songs and chants, and the Atharvaveda is a collection of spells and incantations. The Vedas are written in Sanskrit, an ancient language that is still used in Hindu rituals and philosophy.

The roots of Hinduism are also found in the Upanishads, a collection of philosophical texts that were composed between 800 and 400 BCE. The Upanishads are a part of the Vedas and are considered to be the source of Hindu philosophy. They explore the nature of the self (atman) and the universe (brahman), and the relationship between them. The Upanishads are divided into two main branches: the Samkhya school and the Yoga school. The Samkhya school is a dualistic philosophy that believes in the separation of the self from the universe. The Yoga school is a non-dualistic philosophy that believes in the union of the self with the universe. The Upanishads are a key part of Hindu philosophy and have influenced many other religions and philosophies.

The roots of Hinduism are also found in the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred text that is a part of the Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, and it is considered to be one of the most important texts in Hinduism. It explores the nature of the self and the universe, and the path of spiritual liberation. The Bhagavad Gita is a key part of Hindu philosophy and has influenced many other religions and philosophies.

FROM THE AGAMAS

The Mandalas and Realization

Mystic knowledge of God is imparted to the qualified disciple

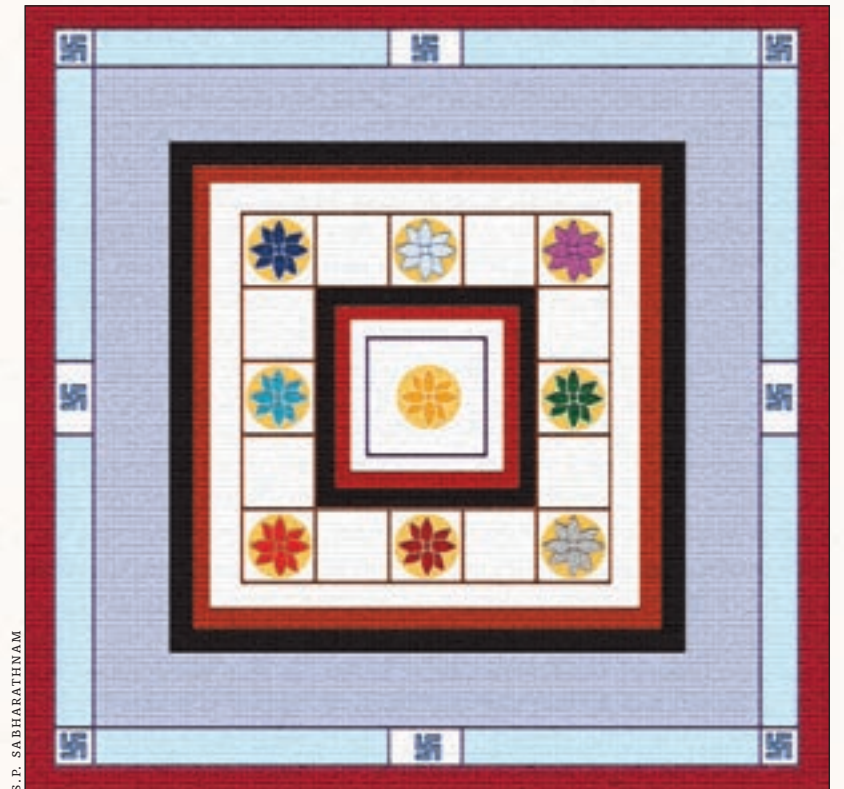
Paushkara Samhita is a third-century scripture of the Vaishnavya Pancharatra philosophical system. It guides the worship of some Vishnu temples. This excerpt from the first chapter of Dr. P. P. Apte's translation, in the form of a discourse between Lord Vishnu and Sage Paushkara, expounds on mandalas, the guru, the disciple and life's ultimate goal, the realization of God.

LORD VISHNU SAID: INDEED, THE OCEAN OF worldly life is impossible to be crossed over by any means other than mandala worship. He is truly remembered as a guru, who, infused with compassion and expecting nothing in return, safely leads an aspirant over to the other shore, the object of knowledge, by helping him board the boat in the form of the mandala. He is a guru to be placed on par with Me who recognizes a devotee immersed helplessly in the ocean of grief and uplifts him with a helping hand in the form of mandala worship.

A glance upon these mandalas brings the same blessings as pilgrimage to the holy fords, to the holy places inhabited by realized souls, to the temples of Gods who are adored and worshiped with flowers, clothes and ornaments, and to the hermitages of great sages where oblations are offered to the holy fire along with the chanting of the Vedic hymns. At the same time, any evil temptation, evil thought, perverse thinking, bad intention, bad motivation, infidelity or heresy present in a person is destroyed forever.

Due to the influence of God, feelings of faith and devotion arise instantly. Unquestionably, such feelings arise in those who have already attained faith. Hence, a disciple should be recognized as one endowed with a host of good qualities, totally absorbed in Him, permanently affiliated to Him and free from any doubts. He may be a brahmin, a kshatriya, a vaishya or a sudra, who is poised on the path of the Self. He may be a bachelor, a householder, a mendicant subsisting on alms or a woman, who has attained discrimination about the Truth. The disciple should be gallant, pure and self-contented, with an ardent desire for realization of the Truth. He should be energetic and resolute, and he should have renounced all family ties.

Having obtained such a worthy disciple and initiated him into the path of mandala worship, the preceptor should commit all the disciple's worldly bonds—past, current and future—into the sacred fire. On annihilation of the host of bonds, the identity with the ultimate truth would commence. The devotee would reach the state of equanimity on attainment of realization of the Lord, who is omnipresent, omniscient and beyond perception; who is characterized by pure knowledge, truth and bliss; who is free from the states of visibility and invisibility; who is non-attached, like the sky; who is situated in the heart of the heart of the aspirant; and who is reflected in his intellect.



Esoteric diagram: Mandala literally means “square.” This is the Maha Vyoma Vyapi Mandala from the Saivite Karana Agama, comprised of nine lotuses

The preceptor should impart to his disciple, who is so eligible, the knowledge of the Self. Seeing that the disciple has fulfilled his duties, he should then apply him to the ultimate principle and instruct him to impart the same to those who are scared of the fear of the worldly life in flux, after having continuously and unwaveringly pondered the principles of knowledge. The teacher is advised to desert his mortal body only after he has transferred the knowledge of the Self to a worthy disciple. By that continuity of tradition, the ultimate sacred knowledge which dispels the darkness of ignorance, which destroys the seed of rebirth and which is the embryonic essence of the universe, does not disappear or lapse.

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The Vedas and Agamas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, shruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 BCE), Bible New Testament (100 CE), Koran (630 CE) or Zend Avesta (600 BCE). There are two principal Vaishnavite Agamas, the Pancharatra and Vaikhanasa. The Paushkara dates to 300 ce.

Under the blessings of Shankaracharya, Swami gives an upadesha to his devotees

Swami Avdheshananda Giri, HINDU of the YEAR

PHAL GIROTA

He is the charismatic leader of 500,000 sadhus of an ancient tradition who are transforming the Hindu world in India

By RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI

SRI AVDHESHANANDA GIRI MAHARAJ, Acharya Mahamandaleshwar of the Juna Akhara, received the 2008 Hindu Renaissance Award from HINDUISM TODAY. A guru to thousands and an inspiration to millions, Swami Avdheshanand has initiated more than a hundred thousand sannyasins, transformed lives with his social initiatives and led Hinduism's

largest monastic order into the 21st century.

HINDUISM TODAY correspondent Rajiv Malik investigated the life of this modern-day saint and the influences that shaped him into a dynamic leader and a steadfast defender of Hinduism.

An early yearning for God

"When you develop a craving to know the Truth, the mountains and caves start attract-

ing you," Swami Avdheshananda Giri told Rajiv. "In 1980, that happened to me."

Hindu tradition holds that one should no more inquire about the past of a sannyasin than about the source of a river. The meager stream at the beginning of a Ganga or a Nile says nothing about the river's greatness, its torrential waters that feed countries and give life to millions. Tradition advises that we should just be thankful for the abundant wa-

ters. But when a sannyasin does talk about his path, it is to encourage others and inspire seekers. Last year, during the Guru Purnima celebrations in New Delhi, Swami Avdheshananda shared with our reporter some of the steps of his quest.

Swami remembers that it was the year 1980 in northern India when an unusually inquisitive young man arrived at conclusions that would later guide his spiritual progress. He realized he did not understand life, nor did those around him. He longed for a truth that, he reasoned, could only be found at the feet of those no longer influenced by the world. Thus began his search for a *satpuru-sha*, a soul who had realized the Truth.

Wandering for months at the lower ranges of the Himalayas, the seeker realized he needed a teacher to guide him, one who was spiritually awake and blessed close connection with God. The young man, who would one day become Swami Avdheshananda, found his guru: Swami Avadhoot Prakash, a rare and elderly sage, expert in yoga and learned in the ancient sacred Hindu texts.

Under the master's tutelage, in the cold foothills of North India, he studied the scriptures and developed a taste for Sanskrit, the language of the Gods. Eventually he received from his first formal initiation (*diksha*) as a *naishtika brahmachari*, opening doors to deeper yoga practices and confirming his aspiration to one day renounce the world.

His resolve was soon tested when Swami Avadhoot Prakash Ji Maharaj left his mortal form. The young novice did not falter. He continued his practices and inner achievements, having faith that he remained under

the protection of God and guru.

In 1985 a very different, matured man emerged from the sacred caves. The yogi approached the revered Swami Satyami-trananda Ji Maharaj of Bharat Mata Mandir, a beloved former teacher. From Swamiji he received sannyas *diksha*, entering his new brotherhood, the holy Juna Akhara, Hinduism's largest order of renunciate monastics.

Until now, he had been free and detached, an inner explorer, who gave little thought to the external world. But after donning the *kavi* robes of the sannyasin, he became a teacher. Accustomed to the practice of *mauna* (silence), he had little idea how important his lectures would become to so many.

Spending more and more time in teaching and social work, he became convinced that he must become an agent of social reform, not just social help. This, he saw, had to be done through the transformation of the individual, based on the precepts laid down by Hindu saints of yore. Swamiji became a *katha vachak* of the Juna Akhara—a speaker and storyteller—traveling almost incessantly inside India and abroad. The *katha vachak* is a master of Ram *katha*, employing stories, drama, music and debate to elucidate religious concepts. He must be able to speak for hours, keeping the audience immersed in the performance, entranced and spiritually uplifted. The best *katha vachaks* are famous in the Hindu world, the likes of Morari Bapu and Rameshbhai Oza, but few are renunciates *sadhus*. In his first years as a Ram *kathaka*, Swami's gift for oratory and his inborn clarity soon earned him the respect and love of eager seekers around the world.

A gifted speaker

Rajiv Pratap Rudy, 52, a former high-ranking official for India's aviation industry, explained, "Swamiji is able to strongly influence us, the common people, whether it is a youth or a senior housewife. He interacts with us not only about religion, but about all of our lives and interests. Swami speaks in a modern manner, but rooted in tradition."

Many felt an instant connection with the new *katha vachak* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The young sannyasin gradually became popular as a guest and a speaker. Swami told HINDUISM TODAY that during those years he was quietly training himself to live more attuned to the ancient teachings of Hinduism, deepening his study of karma and spiritual laws, undergoing a transformation that would strengthen his conviction that *seva*, selfless service, is the core of what a spiritual aspirant should do today.

In 1998, Swami's role as a world-traveling teacher reached a peak. Around the same time, the Acharya Mahamandaleshwar of the *akhara*, the highest leader of the order, passed away. Though a few saintly renunciates carry the title of Mahamandaleshwar—which translates as "supervisor of many monks"—only one is the Acharya. The position is not one of absolute authority, but rather of deep respect. The acharya is the public face of the time-honored organization. He guides the spirit of the *akhara's* activities and initiates all new sannyasins joining the order.

Swami Avdheshananda recalls, "In 1998, the Juna Akhara formally decided to make me one of the Mahamandaleshwars. There was a formal ceremony and a religious ritual,

The Hindu Renaissance Award

The Hindu Renaissance Award was created in 1991 by the founder of HINDUISM TODAY to recognize and strengthen Hindu leaders worldwide. Swami Avdheshananda Giri was presented the award in August, 2008, at a grand satsang during his visit to the Sunnyvale Hindu Temple in California. HINDUISM TODAY's representative, Easan Katir, gave the following short address explaining the award's spirit, its history and the choice of this year's awardee.

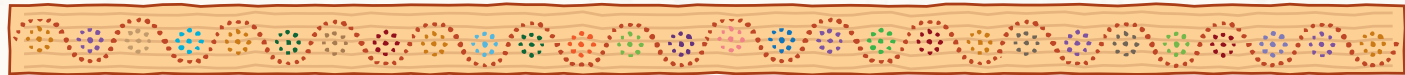
The Hindu Renaissance Award is given by HINDUISM TODAY magazine to leaders who inspire, strengthen and reinvigorate Hinduism and its millions of followers all over the globe," Easan Katir explained. "Such peerless leaders can come in many forms, reflecting the diverse ways of our faith. Some are silent sages, mystics who take us to the heights of our own being by the force their own enlightenment. Others are tireless social workers, servants of Hindus in need, helping children, priests, villages, the sick and the poor, living the Hindu ideals of ahimsa and



compassion. Yet others are scholars, intellectual champions capable of debating deep scriptural truths and fighting in many arenas to protect dharma. This year's recipient belongs to more than one of these categories. Swami Avdheshananda Giri Maharaj was chosen the Acharya Mahamandaleshwar of the holy Juna Akhara and has excelled at the task."

Previous awardees were Swami Paramananda Bharati ('90), Swami Chidananda Saraswati ('91), Swami

Chinmayananda ('92), Mata Amritanandamayi Ma ('93), Swami Satchidananda ('94), Pramukhswami Maharaj ('95), Satya Sai Baba ('96), Sri Chinmoy ('97), Swami Bua ('98), Swami Chidananda Saraswati of Divine Life Society ('99), Ma Yoga Shakti ('00), T. S. Sambamurthy Sivachariar ('01), Dada Vaswani ('02), Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamigal ('03), Dr. K. Pichai Sivacharya ('04), Swami Tejomayananda ('05), Ramesh Bhai Oza ('06) and Sri Balagandharanathaswami ('07).



in which my 'Mahamandaleshwar Patt-abhishekam' was done. Immediately after that, I was also chosen as the new Acharya. This position is designated only by the assembled saints. No one can ask for it, and no one will be appointed from outside."

As the Acharya, Swamiji assumed the mantle of guru for the *akhara's* numerous devotees. He said to our reporter, "May God forgive me and I say this without any kind of arrogance, but I interact with thousands of people every day." It requires stamina, dedication and a strong spiritual foundation to remain centered, and Swami found the answer in discipline. No matter where he is in the world, at 9AM his doors will open to devotees. With three to four flights every month and an average of twenty days away from the main ashram, Swami finds it helpful to plan ahead in detail. Everything is scheduled, even the time allocated for each meal. It is a demanding social routine, far removed from his beginnings as a Himalayan yogi. "What keeps me alive is my meditation," Swami says with candor. "I cannot live without meditation. It gives me energy, bliss, peace and vitality. When you close your eyes and sit in a proper posture, energy will grow and flow at a very rapid speed. Just close your eyes and observe it. There is nothing more powerful than dhyana. Dhyana gives birth to you, it introduces you to your own Self."

As the Acharya, Swami Avdheshananda also became the preceptor for several sannyasins who, like Swami Nachiketa Giri, were already part of the order and decided to work closely with him. Swami Nachiketa

Giri shared, "It is the greatness of Acharya Sri that he has open-heartedly accepted me and other sannyasins who are working in his team. I am grateful to him because after our meeting my life was transformed. I have been associated with him for over one decade. Whatever *sankalpam* (decisions) we undertake are quickly and auspiciously fulfilled. We do them all for the welfare of the society and for the world."

Service to others

"This is an era of service," Swami Avdheshananda proclaims. Dressed in flawless robes but with his cellphone hanging on his hip, ready to receive calls about the coordination of many ongoing projects, he obviously lives by that dictum.

One new initiative receiving much of his attention today is the Bhopal Project, an outreach to educate the most promising minds of the next generation—not in the latest fads of the global marketplace, but in skills meaningful to Hinduism. Though barely under way, this project carries the full force of the Juna Akhara, which is well known for its successful social enterprises.

"In our Bhopal Project we will try to educate youth who are already talented," Swamiji enthused. "We are creating an institute that will teach them Sanskrit and English primarily, but also Spanish, Chinese and French. Our dream is to teach the *Vastu Shastras* (sacred architecture), the *Vedas*, astrology, Ayurveda and our culture to these youth. This will be a higher learning institution to teach not only book knowledge, but

also introduce them to nature and provide organic food for their meals from their own farms. We will prepare them to be sent to countries outside of India, to go out all over the world, spreading the message of the Sannatana Dharma."

The candidates for this new ambassadorship of dharma are children selected from the schools run by the Juna Akhara and other related institutions. Sannyasins teaching at these schools act as talent scouts. The goal is not to create traditional pundits, but rather a new generation of professionals who can interact with other professionals and pollinate society with traditional Hindu values. They may become engineers, doctors or scientists or specialize in skills they learn at Bhopal, but they will be expected to always make a difference.

The most influential of Swami's ongoing projects is Shivganga, a broad effort to help people in an arid part of Madhya Pradesh who live in difficult conditions (see sidebar about the project's beginnings). Distinguished from other projects by its commitment to preserving the local's customs and self-respect, it stands out for the efficiency of its methods and has brought extensive positive exposure in the Indian media.

Swami Naisargika Giri, president of the Sadhvi Shakti Parishad, and one of the few women initiated as sannyasinis by Swami Avdheshananda, says, "Swamiji has brought a revolution there. This was an area where people had not seen automobiles. Today they are good farmers, with enough water available. Some are moving out to get education in



How the Shivganga Project began

"If you ever need to cross Jhabua, do so in the day time, never at night. There the tribals carry bows and arrows." This rather foreboding warning was all that neighbors had to say ten years ago about Jhabua, a poor region of Madhya Pradesh dotted with impoverished, depressed villages a few hours from Indore. Today the villages are like small jewels in the arid landscape. The transformation was brought about by the Shivganga project and its hundreds of volunteers.

"It was in 1998 that Mahesh Sharma, a social worker and devotee of Swami Avdheshananda, first visited Ghatia, just one many villages in the Jabhua area, which is notorious as dangerously distrustful of strangers. He was shocked by the poverty of the villagers, but impressed with their intelligence, candor and warmth. Determined to help, Sharma extensively traveled and stayed in many villages, making friends, learning the customs, traditions and dialect.

"In the old days," the villagers told him, "we had enough water and crops to stay where we were. People did not fight. Now food is scarce, and we have poverty and quarrels. But when the government and the city-folk come to help, they do not connect with us. They give us a lot, but they make us dependent on their ways." Mahesh Sharma realized, then and there, the need for a different kind of social work.

Changing the situation began with a careful plan and much selfless work. Maps of

the region were drawn and the problems the villages faced were studied in depth. The sannyasins contacted Shri Rajendra Prasad, an award-winning engineer from Rajasthan, for guidance and technical support. Water scientists were consulted and a strategy was created that involved no money from the government, relying primarily on the dormant capacity of the villagers themselves. A *jal sansad* (water parliament) was created to plan broader solutions, such as new dams.

With the support of the Juna Akhara, under the blessings of Swami Avdheshananda, the Shivganga project was begun in Jhabua. Its mission statement is, "Self-reliance is essential for development. Self-respect is essential for self-reliance." Hundreds of social entrepreneurs and volunteers are laboring in the ongoing effort to restructure and revive villages. Work is progressing, at different stages, in 1,300 villages, helping to uplift and inspired hundreds of thousands of people and provide them with sustainable supplies of food, water and the basic amenities of life, including schools, places of worship and joyous festivals.

Practical upliftment: (clockwise from top) A long line of young devotees on the move carrying Ganga water; joy and fun at a sports event; a coordinator teaches how to dig a well; villagers move dirt together to create an irrigation ditch;



ALL PHOTOS: SHIVGANGA PROJECT

Giving villages new life



the cities. For centuries their only goal was to feed themselves, but now Swamiji has connected them to God by establishing Sivalinga shrines in their villages, which gives a higher purpose to their lives."

The process is well orchestrated. Work begins by gathering young men who have completed a brief formal education and will live in the village for rest of their lives. Training happens during 3- to 20-day intensives in camps. The first step is to train them in team skills and group cooperation. Because the young men as seen as the heart of the village's transformation, they are taught to lead and make informed decisions. In the middle of a remote, quasi-desertic area, they have classes on *sangat* (group interaction), *udbhodhan* (addressing the public), time management, event management, evaluation methodology and how to pass on what they are absorbing. And, perhaps for the first time, they see others believing in their potential.

Shivganga camp training moves from theory to action quickly. A typical program includes: 1) How to organize the village; 2) The importance of sports for youth; 3) Identifying village problems and their root causes; 4) Finding solutions; 5) Establishing a center for worship and bhajans. The initial projects spearheaded by the group are designed to engage and give confidence to all participants. First they orchestrate a festival for Lord Ganesha and one for Lord Rama, then hold a community sports event. Later, the budding

entrepreneurs work on the water supply and build a permanent shrine or temple.

"We have constructed 350 to 400 dams," exults Swami Avdheshananda. And, he adds, 1,300 new Sivalingas have been installed, one for each village. "We wanted to develop their faith in God. The villagers themselves worked to build them. In the past five years or so, the whole life of those people has been transformed." While he is pleased with the results, Swamiji wants to go farther. "Now we want to provide better education and medical help." The Shivganga yields humanitarian results and is also good for Hinduism. "Before we went there," Swami continues, "large-scale conversion was taking place. That has stopped altogether. Before, no religious events were happening; now we even have Hindu priests officiating at festivals. It is with a lot of enthusiasm that I am sharing with you our extensive plans for that area."

Undeniably, Swami's vibrant personality has advanced the works of India's largest monastic order to a new dynamic standard. But he is quick to point out that the cooperation within the *akhara* is so complete it blurs the lines between the organization and himself. "My projects, the Juna Akhara and myself are so merged with one another that they are just one for me." And his team's projects are manifold. They like great ideas and small solutions, trying to make India and the world a better place one step at a time, focusing on basic strategies—from breeding

better cows to creating chemical-free farms of ayurvedic herbs.

Swami explained why he feels selfless service is so important: "Dharma is something that has to be imbibed and adopted in our lives. We ask that devotees spare some time and devote it to projects which serve all people, contributing with both funds and personal energy. We must treat all people as God. Their cities should be clean and green, their water pure. We should offer medical services and education. We are not claiming that we will change the whole world. But we want to appeal to the Hindu world. We must understand that wherever selfless service exists, prosperity follows. With *samskaras* and education, prosperity is bound to come. People will become self-reliant and self-confident. They will become strong. This is what I see for India."

A host of venerable sannyasins

"The Juna Akhara is the supreme *akhara* of India in terms of seniority and number of sadhus. It is a huge gathering of saints," says Swamiji with unabashed pride. The number of Hindu monks in India and abroad is not known; estimates range from three to five million. According to the Juna Akhara, its order alone claims 500,000 *sadhus*. In comparison, the Catholic Church worldwide counts 460,000 ordained men plus 750,000 women, who are serving full-time and under vows (according to a 2005 census from the Center

for Applied Research in the Apostolate).

Hinduism's monastic structure is complex and organic. Most monks belong to a *parampara* (lineage) or a monastic order, such as the thirteen famous *akharas*. The Hindi word *akhara* translates as "wrestling arena" or place of debate, a reference to vigorous, yet friendly, theological discussions. The *akharas* vary in theology as well as size and influence; most are Smarta in practice, but three are considered Vaishnavite and a few are Saivite. There is plenty of respectful acceptance for different points of view among the groups, and no dominance exists. Other large orders exist outside the *akharas*, such as the Swaminarayan fellowship, the Ramakrishna Order and the Nathas of South India. Within each *akhara*, most sannyasins are also associated with one of the *dashanami* lineages (see sidebar on page 24). Adi Shankara, who originated the *dashanami* system and did much to revitalize and improve the structure of Hindu monasticism, is commonly thought to have founded the *akharas* as well; but they actually predate him by centuries.

Hinduism's *sadhus* are in two broad categories, those who live in monastic communities and those who wander or live in solitude. The socially engaged Juna Akhara also has thousands of *naga sadhus* and *maunis* who strive to uplift the world by their silent existence, anonymously blessing society from secluded caves. Their lack of involvement maintains a certain fluidity in the monastic

order; these outlying branches of the family prevent the Acharya from becoming too central to the structure. During the monumental Kumbha Melas, the mountain-dwelling *sadhhus* join their brothers of the same *akhara* in a surprisingly harmonious weave, populating vast areas under colorful tents—and new sannyasins are initiated by the Acharya Mahamandaleshwar, usually by the thousands in a powerful event. "I have directly initiated around one hundred thousand *sadhhus* in a period of eight years," reckons Swami Avdheshananda. The ordination of sannyasins is perhaps his most important role, for those rare souls become Hinduism's leaders, the living embodiment of wisdom and tradition.

The initiation of new sadhus

The ancient rules that govern the initiation of sannyasins are found in the *Vedas* and in the oral tradition of each monastic lineage. "A candidate could spend anytime from three to twelve years in the company of *sadhhus* before he is initiated," Swami elucidates. "His teachers protect and preserve the seeds of non-attachment. They also assess if the brahmachari's renunciation is truthful and his disinterest in the world is firm. It is the Mahamandaleshwars and the managing *sadhhus* of the *akhara* who decide who qualifies for initiation."

The training of a potential sannyasin varies widely. Most candidates begin by joining the sannyasins in whatever tasks they do. An

aspiring monk will naturally seek those who reflect his own affinities. Some join Sanskritists and masters of scripture; others are drawn to social service or yogic practices.

Vairagya (renunciation) and the degree of control that the aspirant has over his senses are the main qualifications. "You also have to be truthful and ethical," Swami explains. "Your heart has to be full of compassion. You must be connected to your soul. Your inner being should be peaceful. If you are bereft of desires, you are ready to become a sannyasin."

Once a disciple has been approved for the lifetime vows of *sannyas*, he begins a period of intense preparation. Swami Nityananda Giri shares, "Sannyas *diksha* is preceded by intense *sadhana* (spiritual practices), long periods of silence and extended fasts. For the final eleven days, we survive just on water from the holy Ganga. We don't sleep during the final 24 hours either, since *sannyas* is seen as a profound awakening."

The initiation, performed in seclusion, is a pact between the initiate, his guru and God. The rites begin with the future sannyasin throwing into the fire his clothing, his desires and his former self. In the consuming flames he sees the dissolution of his karmas and family ties, his ignorance and doubts. He then vows that his *sannyas* is not taken to fulfill any worldly aspirations, and his head is shaved. In the tradition of the Juna Akhara, sannyasins make a vow to renounce

Swami's devotees speak their hearts

"We met him due to the will of God. Swamiji is not just an individual. He has a full ancient guru tradition behind him. At any time if I need any spiritual guidance, I can always talk to him. He speaks so clearly. The transformation that has happened to me is that I learned to love everybody."

Shailaja Nair, a housewife from Mumbai

"My parents and I used to see Swamiji on television, but one night he came to us in our dreams and asked us to go meet him. Since then my life was transformed. In my career I received so many blessings. Today I am a complete vegetarian and I now respect my parents much more. Everything that happened to me is so positive that I am never going to leave Swamiji."

Shantanu, 27, an operations manager from New Delhi

"My life was a journey of seeking that came to an end when I met Swamiji. Today I finally feel that all I need is within my reach and I do not have to look around aimlessly anymore. I just have to work, improve myself and the things I want to change. Now, whoever I am is because of Maharaj, and whatever I have belongs to him."

Sheel Singla, a housewife from New Delhi

"My whole family have been his devotees for fifteen years. Swamiji has taught us the technique of living. He has given us strength and motivation to work hard in life. He also taught us to live like a family, and we understand each other much better now. He has taught us to love ourselves and help others as we help ourselves. For all this we are so happy to be in his presence. But even when we close our eyes, we can see him."

Sonia Jindal, 25, a fashion designer from Punjab



A personal connection: (below) Swami Avdheshananda leads a satsang during Satguru Purnima 2008 at his Ambala Ashram, joined by other swamis and Mahamandaleshwars. (left) Hundreds patiently wait for a chance to personally meet their beloved guru on stage for a few moments and seek his blessings.





THOMAS KELLY

The spiritual circle's center: Swami Avdheshananda Giri is the regent of an energetic swarm during Kumbha Melas, as in the 2004 Mela at Ujjain.

any contact with fire, which in the old times was necessary for housekeeping and caring for oneself. The next step is a *samskara* performed to liberate his ancestors from all obligations toward him and to liberate him from filial duties. The rituals continue, and the last ceremony in preparation to meet the guru is the cutting of the *shikha*, a hair tuft at the back of the head that symbolizes status and respect in society. The fully shaved head proclaims that the initiate no longer acknowledges distinctions between people. Finally, at the banks of a sacred river, the initiate meets the Acharya Mahamandaleshwar who confers upon him the mystic ordination called *sannyas diksha* and the guru mantra.

Newborn sadhus, ancient paths

The *Upanishads* explain six levels of renunciation, based on what few monastic possessions the *sadhu* has. In today's Juna Akhara, the main distinction is between the unfettered *naga sadhus* and those who stay in society to teach seekers and instruct families. But among the latter there are clear subdivisions, as Swami Nachiketa Giri explains. "During their initiation, the saint [the *acharya*] passes on the *samskaras* to them according to their aspirations." The half million *sadhus* of the Juna Akhara serve God according to the kind of *sannyas diksha* chosen by each. "Aside from the *naga sadhus*, there are the *kutichars*, the *baudhiks*, the *hansas* and the *paramahansas*," *Kutichars* are those who live in a *kuti* (hut), stationed at one place, and remain available to society as counselors, guides and helpers, living frugally and fulfilling renunciate vows. *Baudhiks* are intellectuals—scholars, Sanskritists, learned ones who know the written and oral wisdom of the rishis of yore. *Hansa sannyasins* are teachers who travel as a group of *sadhus*, preaching

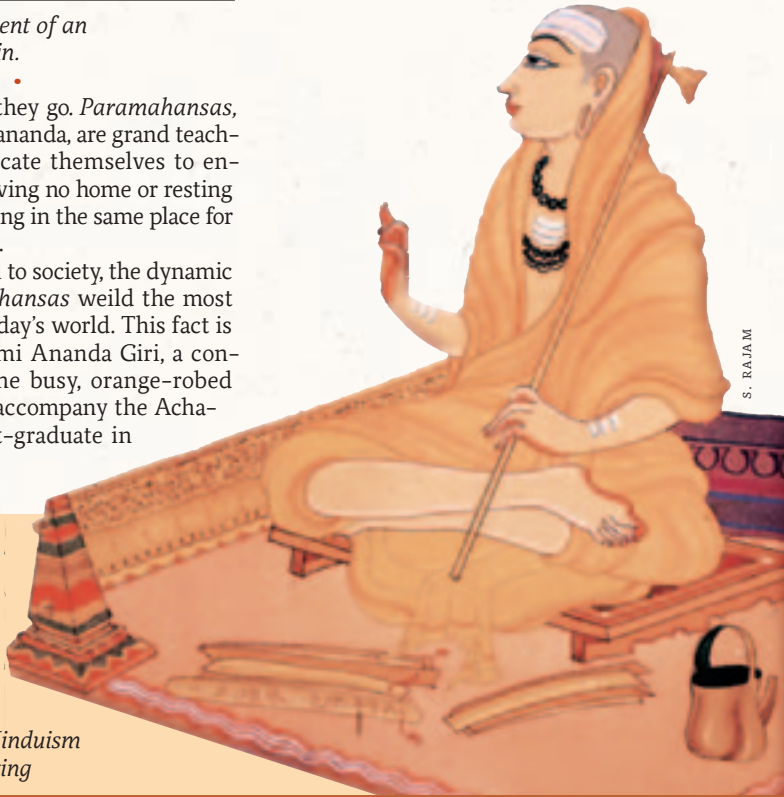
Lasting work:
The Kerala saint lived for only 32 years before disappearing at Kedarnath, but his influence on Hinduism was deep and lasting

Adi Shankaracharya & Hindu monasticism

Adi Shankara (788–820) is a central figure to the Bhakti movement, a wave that swept across India in the 9th century and brought many Jains and Buddhists back to Hinduism. He was a quintessential nondualist. His Advaita Vedanta teachings can be summarized thus, "Brahman (the Supreme Being) is the only truth. The world is an appearance. There is ultimately no difference between Brahman and the *atma*." He revived and empowered the Smarta *sampradaya*, one of the four major denominations of Hinduism. Shankaracharya's influence and philosophy were perpetuated by the creation of monastic protocols and centers which remain influential to this day. From Adi Shankara came also the *dashanami* orders (Sarasvati, Puri, Giri, Bana, Tirtha, Parvati, Bharati, Aranya, Ashrama and Sagara) of which *sannyasins* from all the *akharas* are often members, as Swami Avdheshananda Giri is associated with the Giri *dashanami*. The *akharas* and the *dashanami* system harmoniously overlap in a colorful tapestry.

physics, Ananda Giri is a skilled helper who performs his tasks with devoted zeal. "First of all, I am a disciple of my guru, Swamiji. I do help him as his secretary, but our main relationship is that of guru and *shishya*. The truth is, I am hardly doing anything myself. It is he who is getting everything done through me." This selfless attitude, which runs deep throughout this time-honored order, has created a dynamic, trustworthy group for Swami Avadheshananda's ambitious endeavors. Under the Acharya's leadership, they are carrying out a mission or service and *sadhana*, one day at a time, molding the future of the glorious Juna Akhara, while honoring its noble history, and holding high the peerless standards of Hindu monasticism.

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S. RAJAM



PHAL GIROTA

INTERVIEW

Bring Forth the Dharma

The contemporary and orthodox Swami Avdheshananda shares his wisdom

BY RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI

EVEN AS A REPORTER, I WAS ALWAYS IMPRESSED WITH THE majestic and pious presence of Swami Avdheshananda Giri in the few occasions we met. Our first encounter was in 2003, during the Kumbha Mela at the city of Nashik where he delivered a speech in the company of saints and spiritual leaders. I rushed to the staircase as he walked down the stage, touched his feet and handed him a copy of HINDUISM TODAY.

For years, I had wanted to do an extensive interview, and it all finally came together during his 2008 Guru Purnima functions in New Delhi and Ambala. Devotees from all over the world were gathering for the celebrations in large numbers at his large five-acre ashram. Swami granted me some time over a few days. The interviews would take place in his private chambers.

I was not expecting the mix of modernity and unapologetic tradition that followed. Swami's speech was articulate, contemporary and relevant, yet not a grain of Hinduism's cultural richness was lost in his translation from the ancient to today's world. In his quarters, where a couple of his *sannyasin* initiates are always present to help turn decisions immediately into actions, his personal secretary held fast to his laptop during the interview, using a wireless connection to send e-mails and gather information. Professionalism and

efficiency seem to be the order of the day in the 21st century's Juna Akhara. I found Swamiji to be sharper and more agile than a corporate CEO. Yet, after attending all the four Kumbha Melas and meeting hundreds of swamis, I can say that Swami Avdheshananda is one of the most orthodox Hindu saints in India. This can be seen in the decorations of his ashrams or in the practices of his devotees. It is also visible in his traditional robes and his ever-present personal *kamandalu*, a vessel that in the old days was a saint's only possession, used alternatively to hold water or to store offerings received.

His traditional ways are far more than just outward appearance. His speech is woven with flawless Sanskrit, and what he has to say is brimming with Hindu truths that I have seldom heard so clearly articulated in my work as a correspondent.

Here now, are excerpts from that extemporaneous exchange with HINDUISM TODAY, in which Swami Avdheshananda Giri speaks of his life, his order's work and his vision for the future.

MY JOURNEY TO INFINITY

Sannyas is an unending journey. This is a journey which takes us to the infinity of God. The goal is discovery of one's own Self. When you realize that everything around you is not the Truth and you feel that all that you see is perishable, that all is changing every



moment, then you start aspiring for the Truth. When the aspiration becomes a craving to know That, that intense desire slowly becomes a state of sannyas. It dawns on you. The solitude of mountains and caves becomes attractive. All this happened to me. I moved to the Himalayan mountains and lived there for a long time. During that stay, I realized how important it is to dwell close to *satpurus* (noble souls), those who are awakened and have the blessings of the Almighty on them. Those are the *jivanmuktas* (liberated ones). Such people are not much influenced by worldly things. I realized that until you come in close touch with such sages, you cannot really understand life. This was my experience. That was what took me to the feet of the great saint Swami Avadhoot Prakash.

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

I am the Acharya Mahamandaleshwar of Juna Akhara. My group has a few *mahamandaleshwars*, and our task is to lead and organize thousands and thousands of sannyasins associated with the Juna Akhara, all over India, who are serving the people. Our work, the sum of all of our efforts, is to create samskaras, deep impressions in people's minds. This is not done in the classrooms using the blackboards. We want to shape the devotee's character. If you have to civilize, educate and discipline someone to obey the law, or if you want a person to keep his equilibrium with nature, then a certain awakening has to be catalyzed in that person.

These things can be taught only by example. We sannyasins use our conduct, character and thoughts to reshape society. Most of us may not do this in a very conscious or structured way. But that is the result of keeping full control over the senses and living according to the scriptures. By doing that, we are building the character of individuals. We develop the personality of those who come near.

Our objective is to create harmony, all throughout the world. Since it is today's wrong lifestyle which leads to the world's problems, the sannyasins are teaching people the art of living.

ON INDIA'S CHALLENGES

In India and all over the world, everyone fears terrorism. There are also many other challenges, like global warming and the caste system. But in my view, even bigger and more dangerous than all these problems in India is the problem of *bhogwad* (desire for things and pleasures). We are following the consumerism of the West without understanding it. This lifestyle of blindly fulfilling desires is having an adverse impact on our relationships. This lifestyle is making us focus just on ourselves. I think we have to create proper samskaras



to educate people on this. We are using my *kathas* to do it, which is also a form of group counselling.

CONVERSION

All the forces behind the attempts to convert Hindus have in common people who are fanatics. They feel they are superior and are arrogant about it. Hinduism has no place for all this. We have been here for an eternity. I respectfully must declare that ultimately all religions are *panths* (sects). The only dharma is the Sanatana Dharma, and all religions are but part of it. The most dire threat to Hinduism is conversion. What could be a bigger threat? It is the same whether it comes by the sword or by persuasion. Our whole country has been divided because of it, and Pakistan and Bangladesh went away from us.

HINDUTVA AND AHIMSA

We have to understand that a movement driven by devotion, faith and improvement of the world is good and acceptable. But when the movement's aim is power, it does not become successful.

Today Hindus are recognized as important members of society in the Silicon Valley, in Los Angeles, in Tokyo, in London, in Paris and even in China. Hindus are nonviolent. Hindus believe in the family system. Hindus are not aggressive, not attackers.

Hindus will never harm anyone. There are four reasons why I say this. The first is our principle of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, which means the whole world is one family. For us, the whole world is a big family. Second, *par dara matravat*, meaning women of others are like our mothers. Hindus are known all over the world to maintain the purity of relationships. Third, Hindus believe in *sarve bhavantu sukhina*, let all be happy and blissful. We want the whole world to be harmonious and joyous; we want the welfare of all beings. The fourth principle is *atmavrata sarvabhuteshu*, treat others as they would treat themselves. Hindus are the believers in one God. This God is present everywhere and in every being, formless but also on Earth. Hindus are flexible and generous. They mingle freely with everyone. If there is a least harmful community on this Earth, that is the Hindu community.

OUR TREATMENT OF THE PLANET

Don't you feel that the laws of nature are being violated? Global warming, forests cut down, rivers drying up. Chemicals and fertilizers are destroying the soil. All the glaciers are melting. I have travelled to the North Pole, and I have seen the angry mood of nature.



The *Vedas* say that if you deprive anyone of his honor, that is a sin. We want to protect the rights of even a lion, an elephant and, for that matter, every element of nature, including a cloud. Such nature-loving is our dharma. Just imagine the kindness and open-mindedness of our heritage and culture. We are the people who offer milk to poisonous snakes. We consider trees as our *devatas* (village Gods). Hinduism and Hindus are the most nature- and environment-loving people in this world.

On this Earth, animals have never engaged in widespread killings as we do. Earth has never been divided by them. We are less civilized than animals. They have not encroached on our lands; it is we who have cut down the trees and attacked their places of living. In fact, there is a big debate going on about vegetarianism in the whole world. Research has highlighted that the production of white and red meat is behind global warming. Our teeth and mouth are not designed to consume nonvegetarian food.

TO HINDUS LIVING OUTSIDE INDIA

The Juna Akhara has very few sannyasins who can speak English. We do not have any direct branches outside India today, though we constantly visit many western countries. An *akhara* needs a certain respectful protocol, a decorum that is difficult to create in Europe or the USA. For the past fifteen years I have been visiting America. An awakening is happening there among Hindus about their religion. Today, they show a lot of faith in the Hindu traditions and festivals.

From the very beginning I used to tell the Hindus outside India to preserve five things connected to our tradition and culture: our language, diet, dress, worship of the Ishta Devata (personal or family Deity) and festivals. Language is critically important, and children should know our language, too. The way we dress is part of our culture. Our identity as Hindus must be fully realized. Even the parents are not sure if they are Hindus. They fail to understand most rituals, traditions and practices, so their worship falters. I also insisted on home worship. If the Ishta Devata is there living in the home with the family, then there will be discipline. Then our traditions and values will be preserved. My teachings have been emphasizing these five points as central to Hindus living outside India.

What I want from our Hindus in western countries is to give back their due to their motherland. They are not truly giving back to the

Tangible manifestations of a saint's blessings: Scenes of the Shivganga project, one of the many initiatives of the Juna Akhara under Swami Avdheshanada's dynamic leadership. (from the left, opposite page) A new Sivalinga is worshiped in one of 1,300 enlivened villages; locals enjoy a mandir they built together; a Holi festival organized by the project's youth ignites vibrant devotion.

motherland the way they should. What are they doing for the preservation of the Indian religion, literature, art and culture?

A MESSAGE ABOUT TODAY'S YOUTH

Today's youth have a lot of temptations before them, especially in India. There are a lot of chances of their moving in the wrong direction. One example is the tendency of trying to become rich overnight, and doing every single possible thing to achieve it. My message to the youth is that without hard labor and *sadhana*, success cannot be attained. A youth must be focused, have the qualities of patience and control over his senses, and work hard on both his worldly pursuits and spiritual practices. But to have young people develop these qualities, we need to have a dialogue with them; we must motivate them. Before we guide the young, we must earn their trust and confidence.

MY ADVERSITIES AND ASPIRATIONS

In the life of every human being, times come when the circumstances are not favorable. He feels that he is lacking something. He feels he is not capable. With the blessings of my gurus, I developed confidence and experience. I can face the worst of adversities. Adversities could never defeat me. It would be incorrect to say that I am beyond faltering. I also have *vasanas* and things to overcome. But I have always experienced that the inner presence of my gurus gave me such strength that when challenges came, I simply stood up and faced them.

I have worked to realize my dreams of a better world with better people. Another dream I have is to convey the spirituality of India to the western world. I want to let them know that Indian spirituality has the human dharma defined for the welfare of all beings of the world. Only the spirituality of India has the power to overcome anything that mankind will face.

A Storyteller Who Moves Us

Young and old alike flock to hear Morari Bapu's magical preaching of *Ramayana*

BY PUNIT PATEL

I ENTERED THE CINCINNATI GARDENS ARENA IN OHIO ON July 5, 2008, with great anticipation. This would be my first opportunity to attend a Ram *katha* presented by Morari Bapu, one of its great exponents.

Judging from previous *kathas*, I expected to be almost the only youth (I'm 23) among hundreds of middle-aged adults and their aged parents. Conventional wisdom in our community is that Hindu youth raised in America are just not interested in religion and are not about to sit for three hours a day for nine days, no matter how talented the *kathakar* might be. This belief conveniently focuses on our supposed disinterest in religion rather than on the monotonous manner in which Hindu tradition has been presented to us. I was fully prepared to encounter adults who would first praise me for attending, then tell me that more youth should have come, and finally launch into a speech on what is wrong with my generation, blaming the mass media, language barriers and American culture—but not themselves—for our perceived failings.

Entering the sports arena booked for the event, I removed my shoes and found a central seat, perfectly situated to see Bapu. Most seats were indeed filled with people of my parents' and grandparents' generation. However, a young girl in her mid-twenties sat near me—unwillingly dragged to the event, I assumed, by her parents. But as she began flipping through the pages of her personal copy of the *Ramayana*, I had to conclude she was there of her own volition. Suddenly a large group of youth arrived, nattily dressed in Indian clothes, their japa malas wrapped in shawls embroidered with the name "Ram" and their *Ramayana* copies clasped like treasures. They took up several rows in front, sitting cross-legged on the floor. It was a space they had reserved, my new neighbor explained, by showing up several hours early. Now, this was exciting!

Ram *katha*, a series of discourses interspersed with music, is a popular religious event in North India. The *kathakar*, or storyteller, is an expert in the *Ramayana*, a central Hindu scripture which details the life of Lord Rama. Each *katha* deals with a single theme from the voluminous work. I had attended many others, but never one conducted by Morari Bapu. Typically, a *katha* is a nine-day event held during the evening. Bapu, however, conducted this one in the daytime—9:30 am to 1:00 pm—for the express purpose, he told us frankly, of making people devote the whole nine days to the *katha* and not just show up for an evening program after work or school.

Bapu in Cincinnati, Ohio: The meditating Lord Hanuman provides both a visual backdrop and a spiritual focus for the *katha*'s nine days

Seated in front of an enormous portrait of a golden meditating Hanuman, Bapu softly said, "The topic of this *katha* will be Manas Mithilesh, the mind of King Mithilesh." The hundreds of youth responded with a roar of excitement and applause. Bapu outlined his theme: "Mithilesh, or King Janaka (Sita's father), is a great and powerful yogi, a spiritual adept, concealed in the form of a worldly *bhogi*, one who enjoys the world. There are seven key dimensions to his yoga: karma (action); *gyan* (knowledge); *prem* (love); dharma (duty); *raj* (royalness); *brahma* (creation); and *viraha* (longing)." Bapu explained how in performing his duties, King Janaka maintained self-control and decency and achieved a perfect balance between devotion and dispassion.

Bapu spoke mainly in Hindi, tossing in a bit of Gujarati for cultural context or humor and quoting Western philosophers in English. Occasionally he led the audience in singing *bhajan*s, folk songs, stanzas of *Ramcharitramanasa* or popular religious Bollywood songs. He preferred to call the *katha* "our discussion" rather than "my preach-

ing," and took written questions from the audience each day to answer at the beginning of the next session. Everyone sat quietly as he told us, "I am not here to change any one of you. Rather, I am here to learn to embrace you all. My job is not to moralize to others but to maintain my own morality." He is himself constantly in the process of self-discovery, and presents Hinduism with the full freedom of his own interpretation. He invited each and every listener to do the same, encouraging the youth to take ownership of being a Hindu.

I was fascinated by Bapu's portrayal of Hinduism as a rich and universal religion—"as vast as the sky, as deep as the ocean and as high as the Himalayas." I became convinced that I could be a part

of something grand and larger than life. Bapu praises Hindu culture with pride and loyalty, while managing to encompass both Hindus and non-Hindus of all backgrounds and nationalities within the audience. Jigar Patel, a senior in college who has been listening to Bapu's *katha* for years, said, "Bapu is progressive by nature and forward thinking. That is why he encourages us to exercise our freedom to question beliefs and rituals so we come to better understand them." Bapu encouraged the youth to think about what was being said and, if we agreed with it, then and only then, should we accept it. However, if we decided to embrace the view, there should be no delay in incorporating it into our daily life. He advised us, "Keep the windows of your mind open. Wherever good comes from, let it in."

I had never before heard a *katha* like this, so vibrant and uplifting. I felt proud to be a Hindu. It seemed to me as though the *Ramayana* was fresh off the press. For example, Bapu presented a novel question, "Why is Ram so often portrayed with the bow and arrow and Hanuman with a mace?" Bapu said that our Hindu Gods are more than warriors. He pointed to the picture behind him of Hanuman in meditation. "The need of the hour," Bapu said, "is to put down our weapons of external warfare and begin an internal battle against our own vices."

There is a common belief that heaven is promised to those who hear the stories of the Gods at *katha*. But Bapu said right off, "I am making no promises of anyone reaching heaven after the ninth day of this *katha*. If you have come with such intentions, then get on a flight back home!" Instead, Bapu said that the best outcome from listening to *katha* is to maintain a peaceful atmosphere, whether at home, work or school.

Bapu explained, "The main ingredient in a gathering of the spiritually minded should be love. We also include poetry, songs, Sanskrit mantras and folk songs. Singing together helps us focus on God in the form of love, purity, duty and the ultimate truth." I enjoyed listening to the old Bollywood tunes, traditional Gujarati music, Hindi *ghazals* and the Sanskrit *shlokas* of Shankaracharya.

I asked Sita Sharan, an avid listener of Bapu's *katha* for years and someone who has studied the *Ramayana* since 1970, why she was there. She confided, "Bapu instills a longing, a renewed yearning, for us to do a better job at being ourselves." In calling us to tabulate our lives and assess where we are spiritually and how far we need to go, Bapu urges us, the younger generation, to act with con-

science and to put into practice the values we have learned. When dealing with conflict in our lives, for example, he said that though it is good to turn to God for forgiveness, we must first go to those whom we have wronged and humbly ask for their forgiveness.

With jokes and subtle humor, Bapu engaged each listener, from the oldest to the youngest. He taught how to deal with the sorrow and difficulties of life with firm resolve. He pointed out that everyone near Ram was defeated at least once in the story, regardless of how close they were to him. For example, in battle, Lakshman lost to Indrajit, Ravana's son, and Hanuman lost to Kumbhkarana, Ravana's brother. Bapu said to the youth, "For life to be complete, losing is

important. Though winning is a blessing, losing is an invitation from God to remember Him."

I realized that despite what I had heard from past *kathakaars* and adults, I had never experienced actual improvement in the quality of my life by simply listening to *katha* or doing rituals. But at that moment, as Bapu offered his perspective on winning and losing, I recognized our Hindu dharma is meant to strengthen us in the face of difficulty so we may act with wisdom and manage our emotions through the waves of sorrow and happiness. I had finally understood the words of my guru Sri Sathya Sai Baba, when he said, "Happiness is an interval between sorrows, and sorrow is an interval between happiness." To think that even those who were so close to Ram had faced defeat in their lives,

who are we to complain?

I am forever grateful to Bapu for introducing me to Hinduism, a large part of my own identity that otherwise would have been lost. Observing the other youth present, I saw their motivation to preserve Hindu culture by their religious activities. Bapu rejuvenated our religious beliefs.

Throughout the nine-day *katha*, I had asked myself, "What unique influence has drawn so many young people to devote nine days to attending long religious discourses?" My question was answered on the last day. Listening to Morari Bapu's closing message, my eyes welled with tears. I looked around and saw hundreds of youth, a generation of us, tears streaming from our eyes, enraptured by his inspired and loving words. The answer to my question was this charismatic man of sixty-two years, wearing a white lungi, ban-yan and black shawl, my precious Bapu.

Punit Patel, 23, (at left with Bapu) was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. He attends Boston University, with a focus on bioethics. He attended the Sri Sathya Sai Education for Human Values Program in California for 12 years. E-mail: punitanilpatel@yahoo.com.



UPI PHOTO/JIM RUYMEN

SPIRITUALITY

In the Church of Oprah...

Why does Hinduism get the short end of the stick?

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT a talk show host would be able to motivate millions to look within themselves, reevaluate religion and reflect on spirituality? Of course, this is no ordinary talk show host, for Oprah Winfrey has a ministry all her own with millions of viewers across the globe. According to Nielsen ratings, her show has been number one for 21 seasons and is syndicated in 135 countries.

Oprah's *Soul Series* on her XM radio show hosts teachers, thinkers and authors to talk about matters of the soul. She has touched upon many faith traditions, but none has created as big a reaction as her espousing of the book *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* by Eckhart Tolle, whose philosophy seems to have been gleaned for the most part from Eastern faiths.

The book was published in 2005, but it only became a major sensation after it was anointed by Oprah's Book Club. *A New Earth* is the centerpiece of a free, ten-part virtual class on Oprah.com, which anyone can watch. It has already been downloaded by Oprah fans 30 million times!

In the classes, Oprah and Tolle take readers through the book chapter by chapter, and even lead meditations. "Being able to share this material with you is a gift and a part of the fulfillment of my life's purpose," Oprah Winfrey told her viewers when she inaugurated the new selection. "It was an awakening for me that I want for you, too."

Oprah's "awakening" wasn't particularly welcome to many Christians. As John Jalsevac wrote in an article on LifeSiteNews.com, "Oprah, who is a self-labeled Christian, was recently named the 'most dangerous woman in the world' by Bill Keller, considered by some to be the world's leading Internet evangelist. He accused Oprah of peddling the equivalent of 'spiritual crack.'"

Indeed, looking at discussion boards on blogs you find many Christians are uncomfortable with Oprah's brand of religion, where she and Tolle basically say that God is one, and the paths to God are many; life is eternal and that the stillness within us is who we are at the deepest level. That is a message that Hindus will not find fault with; these principles are the very cornerstone of Hindu dharma. Browsing through the book,

TV star: Oprah Winfrey speaks at the 60th Primetime Emmy Awards

you find many Hindu ideas and beliefs, although their source is rarely pointed out in the book. Most of the philosophical concepts are credited to Buddhism. Yet, the core has clearly been derived from Hinduism.

"The German word for breathing, *atmen*, is derived from the ancient Indian (Sanskrit) word *atman*, meaning the indwelling divine spirit, or God within," writes Tolle. "The fact that breath has no form is one of the reasons why breath awareness is an extremely effective way of bringing space into your life, of generating consciousness." Now, isn't that something that Hindus have always known?

On yet another page, Tolle writes: "When I no longer confuse who I am with a temporary form of 'me,' then the dimension of the limitless and the eternal—God—can express itself through 'me' and guide 'me.' It also frees me from dependency on form."

Perhaps the strongest nod to Hindu belief is this paragraph: "Through the present moment, you have access to the power of life itself, that which has traditionally been called 'God.' As soon as you turn away from it, God ceases to be a reality in your life, and all you are left with is the mental concept of God, which some people believe in and others deny. Even belief in God is only a poor substitute for the living reality of God manifesting every moment of your life. However, there is an even deeper level to the whole than the interconnectedness of everything in existence. At that deeper level, all things are one. It is the Source, the unmanifested one Life. It is the timeless intelligence that manifests as a universe unfolding in time."

Surely, the silken threads of Hinduism seem to run through the tapestry of the book. So how have Hindus taken to *A New Earth* and Oprah's promotion of it? HINDUISM TODAY talked to a young Hindu who has read the book and has strong feelings about it.

Suhag A. Shukla is a lawyer who advocates for the Hindu American Foundation. She believes that all the negative feedback and words of attack about the book are coming from dogmatic and fear-mongering people, who foster intolerance. "Oprah has embraced a path that is, in essence and fact, the Hindu philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, and those who have refused to respect multiple paths to God and the divinity in all beings are lodging the same attack on her that they have against Hindus for centuries," says Shukla. As she points out, Oprah's call for respect of the various paths to the one Truth is not new, not revolutionary and is not the teaching of a modern prophet. It is nothing but "*ekam sat vipraha bahuda vadanti*" or "Truth is one, the wise call it by many names."

While lots of Hindu beliefs are mentioned

in the book, Hinduism is hardly mentioned by name. Anyone with even a passing knowledge of Hinduism cannot fail to notice this lacking. As Shukla explains, "*A New Earth* is nothing but a partial rendition of Advaita Vedanta, but without proper credit or citation. Eckhart Tolle himself, outside of the context of the book, has acknowledged amongst his main sources of inspiration the teachings of Ramana Maharshi and the *Bhagavad Gita*."

While Tolle states that his teachings are a continuation of the teachings of Maharshi and J. Krishnamurti coming together, Shukla finds this a misleading statement. "It seems that Tolle is prescribing only the path of raja yoga through short, daily meditations in which individuals are asked to step back from daily behavior, relationships, situations, etc., and reflect upon their Beingness, Tolle's relabeling of the unity of atman and Brahman," says Shukla. She feels this gives only one part of the Advaita Vedanta approach. Ramana Maharshi prescribed a total path including bhakti yoga (worship), karma yoga (selfless service), raja yoga (meditation) and jnana yoga (knowledge), to be utilized one with another as a way of spiritual evolution toward liberation.

What Shukla finds most disappointing as a Hindu who spends her time advocating on behalf of Hindu Americans and Hinduism is Tolle's reluctance to give Hinduism due credit. She laments, "He is quite liberal in his references to Buddhism, and throughout the book reinterprets select quotations from the *Bible* using Advaita logic. But the word *Hinduism* and Ramana Maharshi's name are cited only a few times. Unfortunately, this slight by Tolle is no different than that by leading teachers of today's yoga movement in America."

Some say Hindus bring this upon themselves, citing the many spiritual teachers who are Hindu yet decline to label their teachings as Hindu. Shukla adds, "We Hindus for too long have allowed those outside the Hindu fold to create Hinduism's image to the outside world, and we have lagged in defining our faith to better reflect our actual beliefs and practices. By this we have allowed the widespread caricaturization of our faith and created an atmosphere in which non-Hindus have become most familiar with the 'caste, cows and curry' version of Hinduism. The general understanding of Hinduism, then, is not based on its deep philosophy or logic, but on ritual and social and cultural practices (and taboos) considered to make up a religious tradition that is not palatable for a primarily Western audience. I believe we should take ownership of Hinduism and define it on our own terms."

Still, the very fact that Winfrey and Tolle have brought Hindu philosophy—by what-

Oprah's Support Has Wrought Wonders

VED P. CHAUDHARY, GENERAL SECRETARY of the Hindu Collective Initiative of North America and former board member at Rutgers University, recently read *A New Earth* and has a positive opinion of the book with regard to its mention of Hinduism. He offered, "Overall, I was happy to see that Tolle cited Hinduism, Vedanta, the *Upanishads* and India more times in this book than Deepak Chopra did in his books."

Chaudhary feels that Tolle tries to involve the American public by liberally interpreting the words of Jesus to agree with the message of Hinduism: "I think that's a good approach because it allows many Americans to see the messages of Vedanta and Hinduism without prejudice; thus he is able to convey a radically different message of Vedanta and Hinduism to the American public."

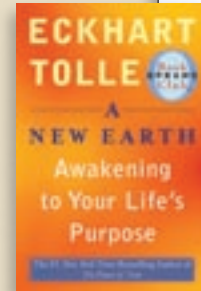
Chaudhary feels Tolle is preparing the ground for Americans' greater acceptance of Hinduism in the future. He added, "Oprah's support has done wonders in this regard. So, even though I wish he had given more credit to Hinduism, on the whole I would like to support him and promote his book and ideas in the hope that he and other western authors will be more forthcoming in acknowledging and spreading the message of Hinduism in America and Europe."

Chaudhary believes that Tolle actually is at an advantage when he writes about Hindu values: "I think no Indian author could write a book like this, because those who practice and promote Hinduism just do not have the world view and the modern language proficiency. They just keep repeating the deep Hindu ideas and philosophy in the language of the ancients. And those Indians who have the world view and the modern language skill generally do not practice or promote Hinduism."



FAT DISHINGER/WENN

Teacher: Eckhart Tolle, born in Germany in 1948, is author of *A New Earth*



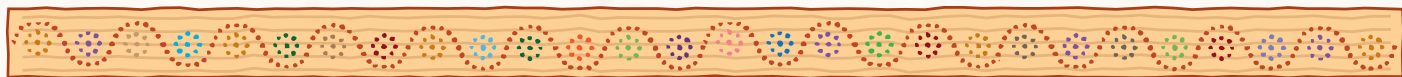
ever name—to the printed page and the web and airwaves is a positive happening. Shukla admits that there are some plus points: "Tolle offers a well-written introduction to one school of Hindu philosophy, and its age-old teachings are now reaching regular Americans in an unprecedented way due to the popularity and widely-held respect for Oprah. It is indeed unfortunate that most will likely never know of the original sources because of the lack of credit and, more importantly, that there is so much more that they can learn, apply and benefit from, as there are immeasurable amounts of spiritual writings from Hindu saints and sages that are readily available."

Oprah's charisma has inspired even young Indian Americans to take the online course. They rave about the wisdom in it. Some Hindus, unfamiliar with their own faith, are enthusiastic about *A New Earth* without realizing that many of the ideas have germinated from Hinduism, an ancient faith from which

Buddhism later sprang.

So what would Suhag Shukla say to Hindus who tell her to read this book? "I have had friends refer this book to me without realizing that these teachings are not new by any means but simply a retelling of age-old wisdom passed down from our great rishis," she responds. "I tell them that if they enjoyed and found inspiration in *A New Earth*, they would benefit from going to the source by reading the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, Aurobindo, Ramakrishna Mission, Chinmaya Mission, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saiva Siddhanta Church and so many others to find a deeper and more comprehensive approach to translate what on first reading can be overwhelming, esoteric philosophy into a truly fulfilling and meaningful way of life."

Author **Lavina Melwani**, a popular freelance correspondent, was born in Sindh, grew up in New Delhi and has lived in Hong Kong and Africa. She currently resides in New York with her husband and two children.



My Family's Goddess Pilgrimage

Grandma, mom, aunts, uncles and cousins visit five Durga temples

BY RUNJHUN NOOPUR, INDIA

DEVOTEES OF GODDESS DURGA BELIEVE that no one gets the opportunity to visit any of Her 51 Shakti Peethas (divine power centers) unless She Herself sends the call. As luck would have it, I was blessed with an invitation from the Goddess and an opportunity to visit not one, but five of Her temples. Three are Shakti Peethas and all are located in the land of the divine, Himachal Pradesh. Joining me were nine members of my extended family: my mother, grandmother, two aunts, one uncle and my four young cousins, including seven-year-old triplets—Varun, Rimjhim and Aryan.

We had planned our five-day pilgrimage—or *yatra*, as we preferred calling it—for the month of May. We hoped to escape the

sweltering heat of India's plains, even as we satiated our spiritual longing; but as soon as we got down at the Chandigarh station, our guide explained that much of the trip was at lower altitudes and there would not be a significant difference in temperature from the plains. Fortunately, the weather, though hot, was bearable.

A practical advantage we had over first-time visitors was already being well acquainted with a local guide. A trip with such a guide is far more convenient and economical than a pre-planned and prepaid travel package. Also, even though looking for a guide may seem like a practical hassle, it is a convenient way of avoiding the fraudulent dealings by travel agents, who are extremely prevalent in the tourist hot spots in Himachal Pradesh and surrounding areas.

Naina Devi

From Chandigarh station, we set out by cab on an unexpectedly long journey through Himachal's winding, mountainous roads. Our first destination was Naina Devi, located in the district of Bilaspur, approximately 115 kilometres from Chandigarh. The lush green beauty of the Himalayan foothills welcomed us, and the delight of a clean, pollution-free environment was refreshing.

Naina Devi temple is on top a somber-looking mountain. Most of the hundreds of devotees choose to walk two kilometers up a steep pathway or take the ropeway. Since we were accompanied by very young kids and also by aged members of the family, we chose to reach the shrine by cab, which took just 15 minutes. The path to the Goddess was flanked by shops selling offerings, flowers



INDRA SHARMA



DINODIA

Holy trekkers: (opposite) The author, age 21, stands third from right with her grandmother Shail Mishra and mother Vijay Dixit to her left and aunts Kumkum Mishra and Kiran Mishra to her right. Kiran's husband Amit is behind the camera. Kumkum's daughter Shivangi, 11, is at back, and her triplets (left to right) Varun, Rimjhim and Aryan, all 7, are in front. (above) Mata Shri Chamunda Devi Temple, Kangra valley. (insets) Goddess Durga on Her vahana, the lion. A map of India showing the temples' general location.



HINDUISM TODAY

and souvenirs peculiar to the region—altars to capitalism we'd see at every temple.

We reached the shrine in the evening, with the intent of attending the evening *arati* worship. It had already begun as we entered. The temple echoed with the sound of the bells, conches and chants. As we stood at the far end of the long queue to the main shrine, nothing could really be seen. Yet the sound of worship drowned the chaos, and an immense stillness settled all around. It was an unsurpassed encounter.

After several minutes of experiencing this beautiful inner silence, our senses suddenly became aware of the hustle and bustle around. The sound of bells faded away as the *arati* came to an end. A long wait to finally enter the main shrine followed, made less tedious by the delightful chanting of "Jai Mata Di" ("Victory to the Divine Mother"), by the enthusiastic devotees.

The Deity of Naina Devi inside the shrine is not a Deity in the conventional sense of a human-like form. She is said to reside

here and, for that matter, in all the *peethas* as an abstract *pindi*—a featureless red stone covered with vermilion. The story of the Shakti Peethas (see sidebar page 35) says that Sati's eyes fell in this place, hence the name *Naina Devi*, "Eye Goddess." Accordingly, the *pindi* stone representing the Goddess has prominent and beautiful eyes. Many devotees offer a pair of minuscule silver eyes in



the belief that they and their family will be protected from eye ailments.

Chintpurni Devi

Our next destination, Chintpurni Devi, is located in the district of Una, 100 kms from Naina Devi. We arrived there at about 11 in the morning and found a two-kilometer queue leading to the temple. The shopkeepers informed us that today, Sunday, was the most crowded. We waited stoically for our turn, even as the kids refused to show an ounce of patience. Punjabi devotees handing out toffees and chips in massive quantities provided a welcome relief.

Finally, our turn came, and we entered the

shrine amidst much hustle and bustle. The huge crowd refused to remain orderly, despite the efforts of police deployed for that purpose. Nobody was allowed to stay in the shrine for more than two seconds as the hordes of people pushed their way inside. It was only with some luck and skill that we were able to have a proper, though fleeting, glimpse of the Deity. The Goddess here, too, resides as a *pindi*. This shrine has an extremely powerful vibration. The priests said it is a seat of tantra, a mystical and magical form of worship.

A large "wish-fulfilling" banyan tree in the temple courtyard is festooned with thousands of red threads. Devotees make a wish



On pilgrimage: (clockwise from above) The silver Sivalingam at Naina Devi; the wish-fulfilling tree at Chintpurni bedecked with thousands of red threads tied there by worshippers; triplets Varun, Rimjhim and Aryan pose in front of the four lion vahanas at the Vajreshwari Devi temple.

and tie a thread on the tree as a symbol of their wish and faith.

After our tumultuous ordeal to meet with the Goddess, we spent some quiet time near the temple enjoying the delicious *suji ka halwa*, a semolina sweet, served as *prasad* by the temple priests.

Jwala Devi

Our next stop was Jwala Devi, just 30 kilometers away. The Goddess here manifests in the form of fire or *jwala*, emanating from a wall. Sati's tongue is said to have fallen here. Dedicated to the nine Goddesses Jwalamukhi, those of "flaming mouth," the temple has nine permanent flames named after the Goddesses—Mahakali, Unpurna, Chandi, Hinglaj, Bindhya Basni, Mahalakshmi, Saraswati, Ambika and Anji Devi. All these flames, or *gyotis*, have been burning incessantly since time immemorial. This miracle reminds us of the triviality of human knowledge and existence before the infinite and unfathomable powers of nature. According to our guide, several excavations for the source of fuel were unsuccessful.

The main attractions of the temple are the *arati* sessions—at early morning, sunrise, afternoon, evening and bedtime. A beautiful room has been designed for the Goddess in the spacious temple premises where She sleeps every night after the evening *arati*.

The bed in this room is piled high with rich dresses decorated with precious ornaments.

After visiting the shrine, we went to the *langar*, a free feeding place providing generous quantities of dal and rice. In addition to the devotees, thousands of poor and hungry people are fed here daily.

Vajreshwari Devi

Our next destination was Vajreshwari Devi, after whom the district of Kangra has been named, about 20 km from Jwala Devi. The original shrine was destroyed by several invaders, beginning with Muhammad of Ghazni in the 11th century ce, but it has since been restored to its original glory. This temple was uncrowded and well organized, without the hustle and bustle that haunted us in the previous shrines, and we had a long and lingering meeting with the Goddess.

In the market here are shops that sell brass wares unique to Himachal Pradesh. We saw beautifully designed incense stick stands, faces of Gods and Goddesses, showpieces and statues. We spent a small fortune on these items before proceeding on!

Chamunda Devi

Our final destination was Chamunda Devi, a shrine equally important for Lord Siva. According to our guide, this site was originally only for Lord Siva and called Nandikeshwar



Devi's chambers: The shrine at Jwala Devi where the Goddess spends the night

Dham. The Chamunda Devi shrine was located 16 kilometers away, on top of the Dhauladhar Hills. This is the place where Goddess Kali is said to have defeated the demons Chand and Mund—hence the shrine's name, Chamunda. The Deity or *pindi* of the Goddess is said to have come down the

mountain in a flood and ever since has been housed in the current shrine along with Nandikeshwar Mahadev. It is one of the most powerful and fierce incarnations of the Goddess.

The system of queues was well managed, as in the Kangra Devi shrine. Every devotee had an opportunity to have a proper view of the Deity. The *pindi* of the Goddess is not as abstract as in the previous shrines. The tradition is that this Deity is so powerful that no one can gaze at it directly. Hence, it is kept completely draped in a red cloth.

A novel aspect of the shrine is the Deity of Lord Nandikeshwar or the Sivalingam which is located below a huge boulder. This Sivalingam was found existing here naturally. A tiny temple was built around it without disturbing the actual setting. Only one person at a time can go inside. Despite the claustrophobic space, the temple is full of positive vibrations. Ardent devotees of Siva claim that a distinct sense of presence of the Almighty can be felt inside that sanctum.

The area on the river near the shrine has been beautifully developed as a theme park

The Origins of Shakti's 51 Power Centers

Asked about the origin of the 51 Peethas, most Hindus would relate the story of Daksha's yajna, or grand sacrifice, to which he invited all the Gods except Lord Siva. According to the story, Sati, Siva's wife and daughter of Daksha, appears uninvited at the sacrifice to confront her father and demand an explanation for the insult to her husband. Humiliated by his arrogant response, she jumps into the sacrificial fire and dies. Siva, learning of the tragedy, destroys the sacrifice, cuts off Daksha's head, picks up the body of Sati and dances distraught across India. Lord Vishnu, fearing the consequences of Siva's grief, cuts Sati's body into pieces with His discus. As each falls to the ground, it creates one of the 51 sacred Peethas, each associated with a specific body part, from Sri Lanka to the Himalayas.

Seeking further explanation of this story, HINDUISM TODAY queried Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam, one of India's foremost scriptural experts. He replied that according to the basic Shakti scriptures, such as *Tantraraja Tantra*, *Yogini Hrudayam* and *Nitya Shodasikharnava*, there are indeed 51 Shakti Peethas, one for each of the 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. But he disputes their association with Daksha's sacrifice and the decimation of Sati's body.

Instead, he says the peethas are related to Shakta or Tantric worship rituals, specifically, the practice of *nyasa*. According to the website, www.shivashakti.com, "The word *nyasa* means 'placing' and refers to a large component of Tantric worship in

which the practitioner touches various parts of his body while at the same time pronouncing a mantra and visualizing a *devata* (divine being) or a *bija* (root) mantra. *Nyasa* is intended to 'divinize' the body of the worshipper."

Dr. Sabharathnam goes to explain, "At the beginning of the Sri Chakra or Sri Vidya worship, six *nyasas* are to be performed, of which *peetha nyasa* is the sixth. During this *nyasa*, the priest touches 51 parts of his body—head, face, right eye, left eye, and

so on—while reciting a *bija* mantra and naming the location of one Shakti Peetha—Kamarupa, Varanasi, Nepala, etc.

According to Dr. Sabharathnam, the scriptures listing the *peetha nyasa* pre-date any association with the story of Daksha's sacrifice. He said, "In order to link the *peethas* with the *Puranas*, the later *Puranic* writers—that is, after the 16th century—added the story of Sati's dismemberment. The *Skanda Mahapurana* deals at length with Daksha's yajna but makes no mention of Siva carrying off Sati's body, nor do any of the authentic Shakta *Tantras*. The story is a fabrication."

"These later writers," he goes on, "took the existing *peetha nyasa*, in which each Peetha is identified with a part of the worshiper's body, and incorporated it into the story of Daksha's sacrifice. In the process, they created at least seven different lists of the Peethas, including one of 108. These later writings do not tally with the correct list provided in *Yogini Hrudayam* and other authentic Tantric texts. Such fabricated lists have been proliferating endlessly from the 17th century."



Jwala Devi: Gold-leafed dome of the fire temple

and picnic spot. Devotees can also take a dip in a pool made for that purpose. There are beautiful statues of Lord Siva, Lord Hanuman and Goddess Parvati. After offering prayers at both temples, the kids with us had a great time boating and playing around in the water.

The Return

As our cab once again followed the mountainous paths, drifting away from the Devbhoomi, the land of the Gods, a sense of satiation drowned our senses. It was a fulfilling journey, a memorable rendezvous with the Divine. It was more than an excursion, it was a spiritual outlet for our accumulated physical and mental stress. The *raksha sutras* (protecting threads) tied on our wrists at each of the five shrines carried the blessings of the Goddess.

In the wake of the August, 2008, stampede at Naina Devi which killed 162 people and injured 400, devotees have become apprehensive about visiting these shrines. While the hazards of the crowd and the occasional unruly bunch of devotees cannot be ruled out, most of these shrines do have suitable arrangements for maintaining order and security. Incidents like the recent stampede are rare and can be avoided if the devotees themselves behave in a more responsible and aware manner and cooperate with the authorities in taking security measures. 🍲

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Chamunda Devi theme park: (clockwise from top left: Lord Siva; Lord Hanuman; the family boating in the nearby river



PHOTOS: AMIT MISRA



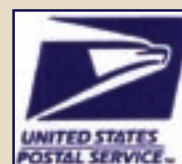
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Swami Durganatha Shanmuga, Administrator.





EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Parenting with Love

An Introduction to "Positive Discipline," with 14 Proven Strategies for Raising Children without Blame, Shame or Pain



HINDUISM TODAY

My Guru's Quest for a Cruelty Free System of Raising Children

IN THE MID-1990S, MY GURUDEVA, SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIASWAMI (1927-2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY, had a startling and discouraging revelation. He learned from several youth among his international Hindu congregation that many of his family devotees were using corporal punishment to correct their children. Shocked that parents supposedly on the spiritual path would follow this common, worldly pattern, he immediately set about to catalyze a change.

He devoted the July, 1998, edition of HINDUISM TODAY to disclosing the devastating, global phenomenon of corporal punishment of children. Corporal punishment in this context means slapping, spanking, pinching or hitting a child as a means of discipline at home or in school, either with the hand, a cane, a belt or a hard object. Such punishment-based discipline also includes other forms of physical distress, as well as emotional battering.

Julie Rajan, the primary author of that issue's feature story, "Sparing the Child, Should Corporal Punishment End?" noted, "Though they don't say much about it, young Hindu adults today feel deep resentment and anger at having been beaten as children. We struggle with feelings of low self-esteem and failure. Many of us will continue the cycle of violence by beating our own children or our spouses simply because we are unable to resolve those feelings. We don't blame our parents, who genuinely loved us and sacrificed for us, for they are themselves just the previous round in this same cycle. We don't blame our Hindu faith either, for corporal punishment of children is present in every culture. But as advocates of nonviolence, we do claim a special role in solving this problem."

Gurudeva was eager to find a way to help Hindu families break the vicious cycle and learn to raise their children without harming them. He realized that many parents who do mistreat their children would

By listening we give children a sense of belonging and acceptance, as this little girl found out while sharing her business plan with Gurudeva

like to change their ways, but don't know how. Dealing with misbehavior without inflicting punishment, blame and shame sounds good, but how do you do it in the face of a screaming child in the middle of a supermarket? Is there a system that can be learned and followed? Are there teachers who provide such training?

Thankfully, Gurudeva discovered the work of Dr. Jane Nelsen, founder of a tremendously successful system called Positive Discipline. Jane teaches that children should be raised with encouragement, love and respect rather than blame, shame and pain. Here, he discovered, was a person who had made nonviolent child-rearing her life's mission. And, she had developed a system with a proven track record. After meeting Jane at his monastery, Gurudeva established a new pattern in his congregation: having parents not only study her books but also teach Positive Discipline classes in their local communities to other parents and teachers who struggle with the same issues.

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Nelsen for giving her wholehearted support to the use of her materials in this Educational Insight. The following pages provide a humble introduction to her thoroughgoing series, which includes *Positive Discipline*, *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers*, *Positive Discipline for Teenagers* and *Positive Discipline A-Z*. Visit www.positivediscipline.com for the full array of her resources. Yes, parenting is an adventure, with constant learning all along the way. Jane says that her considerable formal education is secondary to the education and experience she achieved from her successes and failures as a mother of seven children and grandmother to 20.

We hope this Insight will inspire readers to delve into a full study and adoption of Positive Discipline to help children in your family and community to develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving skills.

Gurudeva spoke of the spiritual dimension of child rearing: "The whole world is reevaluating how we treat women, children, the aged and infirm. Ways of behaving toward our fellow human beings that were normal and acceptable one hundred years ago are no longer acceptable. We now comprehend, as never before, the tragedy of a battered wife or an abused or neglected infant. Shamefully, we do not always live up to the Hindu ideal in these areas.

"What is that ideal? It is this: Never injure others. Hindu children are always treated with great respect and awe, for one does not always know who they are. They may be incarnations of a grandmother, grandfather, aunt or uncle, dearly beloved mother, sister, brother, respected father, a yogi or rishi returned to flesh to help humankind spiritually. As parents and teachers, we must ask, 'Who are these souls? What is their destiny to fulfill in this life? How can I help?' Parents love their children, or at least they should, and the principles of ahimsa—nonviolence and nonhurtfulness, physically, mentally or emotionally—do apply in the parent-child relationship."

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Boodhinatha Veylanawami

Positive Discipline

On the following pages, one of the world's foremost experts on child-rearing presents a practical and compassionate system of guiding children, complete with situational techniques and secrets that society should teach every parent. Drawn from Dr. Nelsen's books, the upper portion of these pages presents some key ideas of her system, and the lower portion presents fourteen strategies. Many of the stories, captions and photos in this Insight were contributed by Kavita Mardemootoo of Mauritius, a parent and avid teacher of Positive Discipline.

BY DR. JANE NELSEN

WHERE DID WE EVER GET THE CRAZY IDEA THAT CHILDREN will do better if we first make them feel worse? Please absorb that statement. It doesn't make any sense at all—yet it is the basis for punishment.

Think of the last time someone put you down, humiliated you and made you feel bad. Did you feel motivated to do better? Did you think, "This is so helpful. I can hardly wait to bring all my problems to this person. She is so encouraging?" Or, did you feel like rebelling, getting even or giving up? One of the latter is what most children do. I call this the Three R's of Punishment: 1) Rebellion, 2) Revenge, 3) Retreat, which comes in two forms: a) Low self-esteem: "I really am a bad person and need to please others to get love." b) Sneaky: "I just



won't get caught next time."

Most parents don't think about the long-term effects of punishment. They don't realize that punishment may stop bad behavior for the moment but may result in future rebellion, revenge or sneakiness. Even when a child becomes obedient, it may be because she has decided (at a subconscious level), "I'm not good enough. Maybe if I obey I will be loved." This can have disastrous results in the future when this same child decides to do whatever her peers want her to do so she will be accepted. When all their intelligence and energy is directed toward proving themselves to others, rebelling or giving up, children do not develop the perceptions and skills needed to become fully competent and capable people.

Punishment is designed to make children pay for what they have done. Positive Discipline is designed to help children learn from what they have done in a safe and encouraging environment. We follow the Five Criteria for Effective Discipline: 1) Does it help children feel a sense of connection (belonging and significance)? 2) Is it respectful and encouraging (kind and firm at the same time)? 3) Is it effective long-term? (Punishment works in the short term, but has negative long-term results.) 4) Does it teach valuable social and life skills for good character (respect, concern for others, problem-solving and cooperation)? 5) Does it help children develop the belief that they are capable?

It is important to emphasize that eliminating punishment does

14 STRATEGIES PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

I. Parents: Look for Improvement, Not Perfection

Let's face it, perfection is an unrealistic expectation, and children would rather not try at all than experience constant discouragement because they don't live up to an adult's expectation of perfection—or their own. Recognition of improvement is encouraging and inspires children to continue their efforts.

A Story from Jane Nelsen: Mrs. Goel's son Arjuna was getting into trouble at school. His teacher was punishing him by having him write fifty sentences every time he misbehaved by talking or being disruptive. Arjuna would refuse to do the sentences—so his teacher would double the number. Mrs. Goel started lecturing and scolding him. Arjuna rebelled further by acting like he didn't care, and that he hated school.

Finally, during a parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Goel asked what percentage of Arjuna's behavior was "bad." The teacher answered, "About fifteen percent." She was amazed to realize the negative reputation Arjuna was getting (and living up to) because more attention was being paid to his 15 percent misbehavior than to his 85 percent good behavior.

During another conference, with Arjuna present, they all agreed that every time he was disruptive or disrespectful in class, he would make up for it by doing something to contribute, such as doing tasks for the teacher,



KAVITA MARDEMOOTOO

Guided by Positive Discipline, these children of Mauritius are developing healthy self-esteem, competence, significance, self-control, inner security and problem-solving skills that will be the foundation for fulfilling their dharma and facing their karma all through life

or tutoring another student who needed help. Arjuna's misbehavior was thus redirected into contributing behavior, and he had very few classroom problems after that.

Working for improvement, instead of expecting perfection, this teacher began

having class meetings, so problems that did occur were solved by the class as a whole. He learned that it is encouraging to children and to parents when we focus our attention on the positive rather than the negative and redirect misbehavior into productive efforts.

not mean children should be allowed to do whatever they want. We need to provide opportunities for them to experience responsibility in direct relationship to the privileges they enjoy. Most parents are afraid that if they stop punishing, permissiveness is the only alternative. Permissiveness doesn't meet any of the five criteria. Permissiveness teaches children to believe that love means giving in, and that the world should bow to their every wish. The Positive Discipline books offer hundreds of alternatives for discipline that are nonpunitive and not permissive—and that meet all of the Five Criteria for Effective Discipline. This Insight presents many of those alternatives.

SWAMI BRAHMAVIDYANANDA: "Hindu culture is kindness. It teaches ahimsa, noninjury, physically, mentally and emotionally. It preaches against *himsa*, hurtfulness. My experience taught me that. I grew up in a simple, humble family in India. My father followed Hindu principles strictly. He was closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, who always taught against violence. My parents never used harsh words or corporal punishment with me or my brothers, not even when we made mistakes. Rather, they guided us by communicating verbally."

Love and Joy in Homes and Classrooms

The primary goal of Positive Discipline is to enable both adults and children to experience more joy, harmony, cooperation, shared responsibility, mutual respect and love in their life and relationships—in other words, more connection. We often act as though we have forgotten that sharing love and joy is the whole point of living and working with children, and find ourselves acting out of fear, judgment, expectations, blame, disappointment and anger. Then we wonder why we feel so miserable. The following are some basic concepts that show us how to avoid the detours that keep us from experiencing love and joy and satisfaction in our relationships with children.

Children Are Social Beings

Children make decisions about themselves and how to behave based on how they see themselves in relationship to others and how they think others feel about them. Children are constantly making decisions and forming beliefs about themselves, about the world, and about what they need to do to survive or thrive. When they are in their "survival" mode (trying to figure out how to feel a sense of belonging and significance), adults often interpret this as misbehavior. Does misbehavior seem different to you when you think of it as "survival mode" behavior? When they are "thriving," they are developing strength in the Significant Seven Perceptions and Skills. These are:

1. Strong perceptions of personal capabilities: "I am capable."
2. Strong perceptions of significance in primary relationships: "I contribute in meaningful ways and I am genuinely needed."
3. Strong perceptions of personal power or influence over life: "I can influence what happens to me."
4. Strong intrapersonal skills: the ability to understand personal emotions and to use that understanding to develop self-discipline and self-control.
5. Strong interpersonal skills: the ability to work with others and develop friendships through communicating, cooperating, negotiating, sharing, empathizing and listening.
6. Strong systemic skills: the ability to respond to the limits and consequences of everyday life with responsibility, adaptability, flexibility and integrity.
7. Strong judgmental skills: the ability to use wisdom and to evaluate situations according to appropriate values.

The extended family has its own challenges and built-in strengths for producing relationships of trust and cooperation. Teaching children respect for their grandparents is essential.



Four Steps for Winning Cooperation

Children feel encouraged when they think you understand their point of view. Once they feel understood, they are more willing to listen and to work on a solution to the problem. Using the following Four Steps for Winning Cooperation is a great way to create a connection before seeking to solve a behavioral problem.

1. Express understanding for the child's feelings. Be sure to check with him to see if you are right.
2. Show empathy without condoning his behavior. A nice touch here is to share times when you have felt or acted similarly.
3. Share your feelings and perceptions.
4. Invite the child to focus on a solution. Ask if he has any ideas on what to do in the future to avoid the problem. If he doesn't, offer some suggestions and seek his agreement.

An attitude of friendliness, caring and respect is essential to these steps. Your decision to create a connection will be enough to create positive feelings in you. After the first two steps, the child will be won over. He will now be ready to hear you when you use the third step (even if you may have expressed your feelings many times before without being heard). The fourth step is

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2. Use the Three Rs for Mistakes

A great way to teach children that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn is to model this yourself by using the Three Rs of Recovery after you have made a mistake: 1) Recognize your mistake. 2) Reconcile. Be willing to say, "I'm sorry, I don't like the way I handled that." 3) Resolve. Focus on solutions rather than blame. It is much easier to take responsibility for a mistake when it is seen as a learning opportunity rather than something bad.

If we see mistakes as bad we tend to feel inadequate and discouraged and may become defensive, evasive, judgmental or critical—of ourselves or others. On the other hand, when mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn, recognizing them will seem like an exciting venture. "I wonder what I will learn from this one." Self-forgiveness is an important element of the first R of Recovery.

A Story from Jane Nelsen: My signature example is the time I said to my then eight-year-old daughter, "Mary, you are a spoiled brat." Mary, who is very familiar with the Three Rs of Recovery, retorted,

"Well, don't tell me later that you are sorry." In total reaction, I said, "You don't have to worry, because I'm not." Mary ran to her bedroom and slammed the door.

I soon reverted back to my rational brain, realized what I had done, and went to her room to apologize. She was still angry, and was not ready for an apology. She had a copy of *Positive Discipline* and was busy scribbling "phony" in the column.

I left the room. I knew I had made a huge mistake. In about five minutes Mary came to me, timidly put her arms around me and said, "I'm sorry, Mama." I said, "Honey, I'm sorry, too. In fact, when I called you a spoiled brat, I was being one. I was upset at you for losing control of your behavior, but I had lost control of my own behavior. I am so sorry." Mary said, "That's okay, I was acting like a brat." I said, "Well, I can see what I did to provoke you to act that way." Mary said, "Well, I can see what I did."



Puja, above, realizes that when she told her mother a lie this morning to save herself from getting in trouble, she was actually creating more trouble than the incident itself caused. After her parents guided her through the three Rs for recovering from her falsehood, Puja is confident that she will not make that mistake again!

3. Spend Time with Your Children

One important way to help children feel encouraged is to spend special time being with them. Have fun! One primary opportunity for cultivating closeness: when tucking children into bed, ask them to share with you their saddest time during the day and their happiest time during the day. Then you share with them. You will be surprised what you learn.

A Story from Amala Katir: Sita didn't realize how important one positive discipline tool had become until one night when she tucked her two girls into bed and walked out. One daughter, Ravindra, shouted, "Mom! You forgot to ask what was the saddest thing that happened today and what was the happiest thing." Not only had their previous endless crying and getting out of bed repeatedly stopped, but these questions asked every night as a remedy had opened a wonderful new world of communication and bonding.

Scheduled Time: One of the most encouraging things parents can do for their children is to spend regular, scheduled special

time with them. You may already spend lots of time with your children. However there is a difference between "have to" time, "casual time," and "scheduled special time."

There are several reasons why special time is so encouraging:

1) Children feel a sense of connection when they can count on special time with you. They feel that they are important to you. This decreases their need to misbehave as a mistaken way to find belonging and significance.

2) Scheduled special sharing is a reminder to you about why you had children in the first place—to enjoy them.

3) When you are busy and your children want your attention, it is easier for them to accept that you don't have time when you say, "Honey, I can't right now, but I sure am looking forward to our special time at 4:30."

Plan the special time with your children. Up to age 6, it can be daily. From 6 to 12 it can be more occasional, even weekly. Brainstorm ahead of time a list of things you would like to do together then.



A father in Mumbai creates a rangoli design with his daughter on Dipavali. By having fun with her, he builds a relationship of trust, affection and cooperation.

likely to be effective now that you have created an atmosphere of respect.

SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA: "In a home I once visited, the host had two sons. He told them, 'Swamiji is here. Ask him whatever you want to ask or know.' The boys replied, 'We don't have any questions.' After breakfast I went to them and asked, 'What is your hobby?' 'We like to play baseball,' was the reply. I said, 'Please teach me about baseball.' Immediately they became enthusiastic about educating me on the game. They showed me some pictures and a video. Gradually they began asking me all about religion and culture." This shows that if you take an interest in a child's interests, slowly a rapport will build.

A Misbehaving Child Is a Discouraged Child

Sometimes it is difficult for us to remember that misbehaving children are speaking to us in code—that they are trying to tell us they want to belong when their behavior inspires frustration rather than love and caring. Some experts believe we will reinforce the behavior if we respond positively to a child who is misbehaving. If, however, we understand that a misbehaving child is a discouraged child, it is obvious that the best way to remove the motivation for misbehavior is to find a positive way to help the child feel belonging and significance.

Accepting this concept intellectually is one thing, but it is quite another to put it into practice for three reasons: 1) Most adults do not feel like being positive when a child is misbehaving. 2) Most adults don't fully understand how their own misbehavior can invite misbehavior from children and therefore are reluctant to accept responsibility for their part of the show. Awareness without blame can create a huge step in resolving conflict. 3) The rare adult who is able to respond to misbehavior



Want kids to behave? Nothing works like sharing. Even the simple task of making sandwiches together creates close ties and gives young ones a sense of importance and belonging. This prevents misbehavior caused by discouragement.

with positive encouragement will often be rejected by the child. This is because children (like most of us) are not always receptive to encouragement when they need it the most. They are too emotionally upset to accept it. The solution: wait for a cooling-off period and try again with encouragement.

The child who needs love the most is often the child who acts the most unlovable. Understanding the four mistaken goals of behavior helps adults remember what children are really saying with their misbehavior: "I just want to belong." It also helps us know what to do to resolve the problem in ways that are encouraging while teaching children life skills.

Think of the misbehavior as a code and ask yourself, "What is she really trying to tell me?" The child is not consciously aware of her coded message, but will feel deeply understood when you deal with her hidden belief instead of reacting to the behavior. You will feel differently if you

remember that behind the misbehavior is a child who just wants to belong and is confused or unskilled about how to accomplish this goal in a socially useful way. Look closely to see if your words and actions are causing the child to believe she doesn't belong or have significance.

The following chart shows the four mistaken goals and corresponding beliefs that motivate misbehavior.

A CHILD'S MISTAKEN GOAL	CORRESPONDING ERRONEOUS BELIEF
Undue Attention	"I belong only when I have your attention."
Misguided Power	"I belong only when I'm the boss, or at least when I don't let you boss me."
Revenge	"I don't belong, but at least I can hurt back."
Assumed Inadequacy	"It is impossible to belong. I give up."

Undue Attention: Everyone wants attention. There is nothing wrong with that. The problem occurs when a child wants excessive attention. In other words, she seeks belonging in annoying ways rather than useful ways. The behavior is annoying because it comes from the child's mistaken belief of the moment: "I belong only when I am the center of attention." This belief adds a sense of urgency and persistence to the behavior that others find annoying. It can be very encouraging to children seeking undue attention to redirect them to get attention in contributing ways, such as helping you with a task.

Misguided Power: Everyone wants power. Power is not a bad thing; it depends on how it is used. When children have the mistaken belief

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4. Take Time for Training

The idea of setting aside time for training children is not as obvious as it may sound. Too often, adults expect children to accomplish tasks for which there has not been adequate training. This is more typical in homes than in schools. Parents may expect children to clean their rooms, without having ever shown them how. Children go into their messy rooms and feel overwhelmed. It would help if a parent said, "Put your clean clothes in your drawers and your dirty clothes in the hamper and then I'll let you know what is next." Next they could put their toys on the shelves or in toy boxes. To make it more fun, suggest all toys with wheels first, then toys with body parts, then toys that are animals, etc. Before long, the child has internalized the idea and learns what is expected.

There is often a great communication gap. When Dad tells his daughter to clean up the garage, each may have very different ideas of what this means. Taking time for specific training can eliminate the misunderstanding. Taking time for training

means being specific about your terms and expectations.

Even when you do provide training, remember that children will seldom do things as well as you would like. Improvement is a life-long process. Remember too, the things you want them to do may not be a high priority for them until they become adults with children of their own to guide. We all do better at things that have a high priority in our lives. Even though cleanliness and manners may not be important for children, they still need to learn these qualities. Adults do, however, need to remember that kids are kids.

A Story from Jane: A father of eight children complained that his son slammed the door every time he left the house. He admitted he was ready to slap the boy. The group suggested that he take his son over to the door and show him how to close it carefully—run through it a couple of times, actually train him how to close a door without slamming it. He came back to class the next week amazed—"It worked!"



This adorable child had a habit of drawing on walls with crayons and pens! Mom and Dad tried everything, from time-outs to yelling, but nothing worked. Then Dad realized it might be a simple training problem, so they began asking her the same question every day, "What do we all write on?" and together they replied, "Paper!" Soon she learned that drawings are ONLY to be done on paper, NOT on walls.

5. Give a Hug

In many cases adults can help children change their behavior when they stop dealing with the misbehavior and deal with the underlying cause: discouragement.

Encouragement is providing opportunities for a child to develop the perceptions, "I'm capable, I can contribute, and I can influence what happens to me or how I respond." Encouragement is teaching children the life skills and social responsibility they need to be successful in life and relationships. Such support can be as simple as giving them a hug to help them feel better and thus do better.

A Story from Jane: A young father was frustrated and perplexed about the frequent temper tantrums of his four-year-old son. Scolding or punishing only increased the tantrums. The father learned in his parenting class that a misbehaving child is a discouraged child, and that encouragement is the best way to deal with misbehavior. The idea seemed backward to him—sort of like rewarding unruliness. Still, he was intrigued with the idea that children do better when they feel better. He decided to test the theory.

The next time his son started a tantrum, the father got down on one knee and shouted above the racket, "I need a hug." His son paused and asked through his sobs, "What?" The father shouted again, "I need a hug." His son stopped sobbing long enough to ask incredulously, "Now?!" The father said, "Yes, now." The son seemed totally bewildered, but he stopped his temper tantrum and said somewhat begrudgingly, "Okay." Then he stiffly gave his father a hug. Soon the stiffness disappeared and they melted into each other's arms. After a few moments the father said, "Thanks, I needed that." His son said, with a small tremor on his lips, "So did I."

Remember timing. Sometimes hugs don't work because the child is too upset to give or receive a hug or any kind of encouragement. You can still try. If the child is unwilling, you can say, "I sure would like a hug whenever you are ready," and then leave the area. Parents report that when they try this, the child usually comes after them right away wanting a hug.



Ashwin was playing in the rain and ignored his mother's call to come inside. He was peeved, and Mom was growing impatient and went out to fetch him. She surprised her son by saying she was really hot and needed a wet hug. They both laughed as he tried to smother her in hugs and kisses. Next time he will want to please Mom.



that they belong only when they are the boss, their use of power looks like misbehavior. When they operate from the mistaken goal of misguided power, they are not using their power in useful ways and need redirection to use it in socially useful ways. A power-hungry child can be shown how to lead others instead of dominating them.

Revenge: It seems to be human nature to strike back when we feel hurt. This is why revenge cycles are so common. It is ironic that adults want children to control their behavior when adults have difficulty controlling their own behavior. Controlling your own behavior is very important to break the revenge cycle. When you are feeling hurt, you can avoid striking back. Instead, validate the child's feelings.

Assumed Inadequacy: The child who operates from the mistaken goal of assumed inadequacy (because of a mistaken belief about her capabilities) may not cause you many problems during the day, but may haunt you at night when you have time to think about how she seems to have given up. Unlike the child who says, "I can't," just to get you to pay attention, the child operating from assumed inadequacy really believes she can't. You need to take time to show her a small step. Don't do all the steps. Having too much done for her could be what gave her the impression that she is inadequate. "I'll show you how to tie one shoe, and then you can show me what you have learned and let me know if you need more help."

Clues for Identifying Mistaken Goals

There are two clues adults can use to help identify the goal. Clue number one is to examine your emotional reaction. Ask yourself, "Underneath my anger or frustration, am I feeling annoyed, threatened, disappointed or inadequate?" If the child's mistaken goal is **undue attention**, you will feel irritation, worry, guilt or annoyance. If it is **misguided power**, you will feel threatened, challenged, provoked or defeated. If revenge is the goal, you will feel hurt, disappointed,

disbelieving or disgusted. When the goal is **assumed inadequacy**, you will feel inadequate, hopeless or helpless, asking yourself, "How can I possibly reach and inspire this child?" Practice observing your feelings and you will catch on to how this works. Many parents and teachers have reported that they keep a copy of the Positive Discipline Mistaken Goal Chart on their desk or refrigerator as a useful resource. It helps them remember the basis for most misbehavior, and to be more effective in helping their children during times of stress.

Clue number two is to observe the child's response when you use conventional methods to cope with the behavior. Here is a guide: **Undue Attention:** The child stops for a while, but soon resumes the same (or some other) behavior to get your attention. **Misguided Power:** The child continues misbehaving and may verbally defy or passively resist your request to stop. This can easily escalate to a power struggle between you and the child. **Revenge:** The child retaliates by doing something destructive or saying something hurtful. This may escalate to a revenge cycle between you and the child. **Assumed Inadequacy:** The child usually is passive, hoping you will soon give up and leave him alone. Sometimes

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It's natural for siblings to compete, and even to fight. One way to defuse battles is to restrain your own emotions, and not put down one child in front of the other or blame either of them. Instead, end the activity they were involved in before the conflict and send each to a favorite place for some alone time. Soon they will get the idea that fighting in this family is not appropriate.



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this child will act out (such as being the class clown to cover up feelings of inadequacy in academics, sports, etc.).

These two clues help parents and teachers break the code of what children are really saying with their behavior. Even when we understand the motive, it may not be easy to respond wisely. When we encounter a child who is misbehaving, it is much easier (and normal) to react from our secondary feelings of anger and frustration than it is to stop and wonder: "What is this child trying to tell me?" In my book, we also explain a technique of asking strategic questions of the child to determine the hidden motives of her behavior. One further complexity is that a child may be motivated by more than one mistaken goal at time!

Effective Intervention

Once you know the mistaken goal (and the belief behind it), you can choose an effective strategy to create a connection with children and help them achieve their true goal of belonging and significance. Here are some basic remedies.

WHEN THE GOAL IS UNDUE ATTENTION

1) Redirect the child into contributing behavior. 2) Do the unexpected. A big hug is often effective. 3) Set up a schedule for special time with the child on a regular basis. 4) Smile in a knowing way that communicates you are

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6. Give Encouragement Freely

Use encouragement to help children develop a sense of belonging, security, love and acceptance. They misbehave because they don't feel this belonging. Celebrate each step in the direction of improvement (rather than focusing on mistakes). Give positive feedback at every opportunity. Communication is important. Don't assume the child knows you love and care about him or that you are pleased when he does something right. You need to express these feelings.

A Story from Kavita: Priya was working hard one night studying for her exams. Actually, she had been working hard every day and night for the last year and she was completely exhausted. It seemed as though her mind couldn't retain one more word! At the age of seventeen she knew that her parents loved her—well, at least until the exam, she thought to herself. Mom and Dad wanted her to be in the top ten in her class, so she would get into the best university. They told her it was for her own good, for her future, but the pressure of it all made her feel that

she would lose everything if she didn't come out with the perfect score. If she didn't, would her parents still beam when they looked at her? Probably not. She had to earn their love or she would lose it, she said again to herself as she re-opened her English book.

Hours later she was awakened with a soft touch. She found herself face down on her book. She must have fallen asleep. Confused, she looked up to see both her parents standing by her side. Her father gathered her into his arms as if she were five again and sat on her bed, her mother following. She felt so safe, and in gentle voices her parents reassured her that they would always be her refuge. She was trying her best, and no matter what the outcome of the exam, they would support and help her. Tears rolled down Priya's eyes and she felt more determined than ever, feeling a new strength surging through her. Even young adults need encouragement to face life's challenges.



KAVITA MARDEMOOTO

Basanti had the habit of putting her school work off until the last minute. One day her parents took her out for a milkshake, and had her look around at the people and consider their many walks of life. They explained that, through her schooling, she has the power to open many doors for her future. Since then, with the strong support of her family, she spends long hours studying—knowing that failure is okay, but not trying is unacceptable.

7. Establish Routine Charts

The more children do for themselves, the more capable and encouraged they feel. One of the best ways to avoid bedtime hassles and morning hassles is to get children involved in creating routine charts. Start by having your child make a list of all the things she needs to do before going to bed. The list might include: pick up toys, snack, bath, jammies, brush teeth, choose clothes for the next morning, bedtime story and hugs. Copy (or when children are old enough let them copy) all the items onto a chart. Then hang the chart on a wall where she can reach it. Let the routine chart be the boss. Instead of telling your child what to do, ask, "What is next on your routine chart?" Often, she will tell you without your asking.

Remember, the goal is to help children feel capable and encouraged. A nice fringe benefit is that you will be able to stop nagging and will experience more peaceful bedtimes and mornings.

A Story from Kavita: Aruna, an only child, was always around grown-ups, so she thought she was all grown up, too. When it

was time to get ready for bed, she always insisted on staying up like Mom and Dad. The six-year-old would hold on to the sofa and scream until she got her way. As a result, she had difficulty waking up in the morning for school and sometimes even fell asleep at her desk. All this left her moody and irritable.

One day Mom read about routine charts, and their wonderful potential to make children happier and healthier. When Aruna came home from school the next day, Mom had big white paper with color pens, glitter and cut outs all over the kitchen table. Of course, Aruna wanted to help! Before long, to her own amazement, she had created a fun-looking bedtime chart! She couldn't wait to start putting the gold stars in the squares.

Mom told her that when the small hand on the clock reached the 8, she could start following the chart. It was so much fun that she actually looked forward to getting ready for bed. By the time the newness wore out and she was no longer impressed by the chart, she had developed a strong routine and bedtime was no longer a hassle.



KAVITA MARDEMOOTO

Like Aruna in the story, Jayendra loves his routine chart. Completing it each day makes him feel competent and independent.



not “going to get hooked into this,” and then say, “I’m looking forward to our special time at six o’clock.” 5) Set up nonverbal signals with your child in advance: a hand over your heart to signal, “I love you,” or a hand cupped to your ear to signal you are ready to listen when the whining stops. 6) Give reassurance and show faith. “I love you, and I know you can handle this yourself.” 7) Ignore the behavior (but not the child) by placing your hand on his shoulder in a caring manner while continuing your activity. 8) During pleasant moments, take time for training and role play other ways to behave, such as using words instead of whining. 9) Verbalize love and caring.

WHEN THE GOAL IS MISGUIDED POWER

Withdraw from the power struggle to allow for a cooling-off period; then do one of the following: 1) Admit you can’t make the child do anything and ask her for help in finding a solution that works for both of you. 2) Use the four steps for winning cooperation. 3) Follow up with a one-to-one problem-solving session. 4) Redirect the child to use power constructively. 5) Get the child involved in finding solutions. 6) Decide what you will do, not what you will try to make the child do. Example: “I will pull over to the side of the road until you two stop fighting.” It is important that such actions be done with kindness as well as firmness. It is especially effective to keep quiet while following through—avoid reminders, threats and lectures. 7) Set up a schedule for spending special time with the child. 8) Get children involved in creating routines and then let the routines be the boss. 9) Offer limited choices. 10) Invite the child to put the problem on the family meeting agenda. 11) Verbalize love and caring.

WHEN THE GOAL IS REVENGE

Remember that children cover up hurt feelings, which make them feel powerless, by seeking revenge, which gives them a sense of

control. Effective remedies include the following: 1) Withdraw from the revenge cycle by avoiding retaliation. 2) Make a guess about what has hurt the child and show empathy. Validate the hurt feelings. 3) Use reflective listening. Get into the child’s world by reflecting back what you are hearing, “You sound very hurt.” Reflective listening can include curiosity questions, “Can you tell me more? Then what happened? How did that make you feel?” The goal is to avoid sharing your point of view and to understand the child’s point of view. 4) Use the Three Rs of Recovery if you caused the hurt. 5) Use the four steps for winning cooperation. 6) After a cooling-off period, engage the child in one-to-one problem solving. 7) Show you care and give encouragement. 8) Set up a schedule for special time with the child. 9) Verbalize love and caring.

WHEN THE GOAL IS ASSUMED INADEQUACY

Remember that the child is not inadequate, but will continue to act inadequate until she gives up her belief that she is. Here are some remedies. 1) Take time for training, making the steps as basic as necessary for the child to experience success. Demonstrate a small step that the child can duplicate. “I will draw half the circle, and you draw the other half.” 2) Arrange for small successes. Find out anything the child can do well, and give her many opportunities to share her expertise. 3) Acknowledge any positive attempt, no matter how small. 4) Eliminate all expectations of perfection. 5) Focus on the child’s assets. 6) Do not give up. 7) Spend regular, special time with the child. 8) Verbalize love and caring.

Teach and Model Mutual Respect

Mutual respect incorporates attitudes of: 1) faith in the abilities of yourself and others; 2) interest in the point of view of others as well as your own and; 3) willingness to take responsibility and ownership



for your own contribution to the problem. The best way to teach these attitudes to children is by modeling them yourself.

TARA KATIR: “We cannot teach Positive Discipline without establishing rapport. Developing rapport means spending time doing things together and talking with your children at their level about things they want to talk about. Often this can be achieved by just being together silently, or simply feeling the good bond of parent and child while enjoying an activity. Rapport can easily be broken. Speaking sharply can break it. Then it needs to be repaired.”

What We Do Is Never as Important as How We Do It

The feeling and attitude behind what we do will determine the “how.” The feeling behind words is often most evident in our tone of voice.

One day I came home from a trip and was welcomed by a sink full of dirty dishes. I felt discouraged and angry and started scolding and criticizing, “We have agreed that everyone will put their dishes in the dishwasher. How come
The values of Positive Discipline only work when a strong rapport has been created. There is no better way to build that foundation of trust than to be with your children. Knowing this, the Patels have taken their children to the beach for the day, to fly kites but mostly just to have fun.

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8. Focus on Solutions

Get children involved in finding solutions to the cause of their misbehavior or mistake that are 1) related, 2) respectful, 3) reasonable and 4) helpful (the “three Rs and an H”).

Making amends is a solution that is encouraging when used in a non-punitive manner, because children experience the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and correct any resulting problems. Making amends is encouraging because children learn they can be responsible and accountable for their behavior without fear of blame, shame and pain.

It is sad that some adults think it is more important for children to feel blame, shame and pain for what they have done than to make amends and experience encouragement that will motivate them to stop misbehaving. It is important to note that children do not get away with misbehavior when they are encouraged to make amends. They learn to be accountable, while keeping their dignity and respect intact.

For example, when your daughter bops

a baseball through the garage window and together you decide that the solution is to fix the window (with materials purchased with her allowance), you have arrived at a solution that is related, respectful, reasonable and helpful. So long as you stay out of a blaming mode and see the mistake as an opportunity to learn, you have practiced problem-solving skills and respect with your child, and you have enjoyed some quality time together. When focusing on solutions, one life skill that is often needed is calling for a cooling off period (see strategy 9).

A Story from Jane: Ravindra, the custodian in an elementary school, caught five students defacing classroom doors. He spoke to them respectfully and together they decided they would make amends by helping him repaint the doors. He was so understanding that he inspired the boys to take pride in their work and to discourage other



After finding a way for Anjali to participate in the daily puja, the Gowda family was amazed to witness an immediate change in her demeanor. Being the middle child, she needs a little extra responsibility to feel that she is an important member of the family.

children from vandalizing. He had successfully used three Positive Discipline tools: 1) focusing on solutions, 2) creating a connection before correction and 3) redirecting the misbehavior.

9. Cool Off Before Solving a Problem

In coping with tough situations, proper timing will improve your effectiveness tenfold. It does not work to deal with a problem at the time of conflict. Emotions get in the way. Thus, it is important to understand and to teach children that, in most cases, a cooling off period is necessary before seeking a solution. Since it is difficult to focus on solutions when we are upset and responding from our irrational brain, where the options are fight or flight, it is helpful to wait until we have calmed down and can access our rational brains. I call this positive time out.

How do you teach children about cooling-off periods? By example and repetition. You (or the children) can go to a separate room and do something to make yourself feel better, and then work on the problem with mutual respect. “I think we are both too upset to discuss this now, but I would like to get together with you when we have had time to cool off.” Another approach might be, “What would help you the most right now—to take some positive time out, or to put this problem on the meeting agenda so we can get

some help from the whole family later?”

Have your children help you design a pleasant area (with cushions, books, music, stuffed animals) where they can go to calm down when they are upset. Remember that children do better when they feel better.

A Story from Kavita: “I can’t believe what just happened!” Roshan’s father stammered. “I can’t even think straight, I’m so mad! You need to go upstairs. I need to calm down.” Roshan, age 6, ran to his favorite time-out spot and hurled his body on the cushions. His father, fraught with anger, went into his study and shut the door, struggling to regain his composure. Both gradually felt better as, in their own worlds, they were able to calm their breaths and maybe punch a couple of cushions. After 15 minutes, young Roshan was quietly playing with his favorite toy car. Downstairs his father had turned his attention to today’s newspaper and was reading an article. When he saw the time, he walked up the stairs, tussled Roshan’s hair and sat on the floor next to him, eye level. Now the time was right for solving the problem.



Little Deepa has been overcome with emotion. Mom knows this is not the time to sort out the problems that caused the upset, and arranges for her daughter to cool off in their agreed-upon place.



no one keeps their agreements when I'm not around?" I looked for someone to blame, but everyone claimed, "I didn't do it." From a negative feeling I said, "Okay, we have to have a family meeting and decide what to do about this." Can you imagine the outcome if we had tried to have a meeting based on my feelings of blame and criticism? We would not have found the kind of effective solution that comes from an atmosphere of love and respect. My attacking attitude would have inspired defensiveness and counterattacks instead of harmony and solutions. I realized what I was doing and immediately changed directions. I could see that my negative attitude would not produce the results I wanted—to say nothing of how miserable it made me feel at the time. As soon as I changed my attitude, my feelings changed and I had immediate inspiration about how to get positive results. I said, "Let's go out for pizza. Later we will have a family meeting to look for solutions instead of blame."

Based on those feelings, we had a successful meeting. We laughingly agreed that it must have been a phantom who left the dishes in the sink. When we stopped looking for blame and concentrated on solutions, Mark and Mary proposed that we all be assigned two days a week to take care of the phantom's dirty dishes. As you might guess, fewer dishes were left in the sink after this friendly discussion.

BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI: Kids can learn from parents that it is through taking a humble attitude, rather than a dominant position, that conflicts are resolved smoothly and easily. Mastery of resolving differences keeps our young one's lives sublime and their subconscious minds free of the disturbances caused by memories of unresolved disagreements.

Give Children the Benefit of the Doubt
Every child wants to succeed. Every child wants to have good relationships with others. Every child wants to feel a sense of connection,

belonging and significance. When we remember this, we will give misbehaving children the benefit of the doubt. Instead of assuming they want to be difficult, we will assume they want positive results and are simply confused about how to achieve them. They don't have the knowledge, the skills or the maturity to find belonging and significance in useful ways. It is our job to help them develop what they need. To be effective, our approach must be based on an attitude of, "I know you want to succeed. How can I help?"

DR. KRISHNA D. BHAT: "Parents should know the needs, aspirations, strengths and limitations of every child. Paramahansa Niranjanananda calls it the SWAN theory: Strengths, Weaknesses, Aspirations and Needs. Children should be properly molded by parents. They are highly suggestible, like malleable metal. They are very imitative and will copy our behavior, which is one of the greatest risks of using corporal punishment."

Freely Express Unconditional Love
Children need to know they are more important to us than anything they do. They need to know they are more important than their grades. They need to know they are more important than the material possessions in our lives. Jiva's mom made some mistakes before she remembered this vital point. When Jiva broke one of her prize antique vases, she was so heartbroken over it that she sat down and cried. Jiva felt awful about what he had done, but finally asked, "Mother, would you feel that bad if something happened to me?"

Children often don't know how important and loved they are. Sometimes parents and teachers focus so much on misbehavior that they lose sight of the child—and the child loses sight of himself. One mother asked her three-year-old, "Do you know I really love you?" The reply was, "Yes, I know you love me when I am good." A teenager replied to the same question, "I know you love me if I get good grades."



The Teen Years
.....
When children reach their teens, they naturally go through a major individuation process. They are exploring who they are, separate from their parents. This often translates into rebellion as they test parental values.
Peer pressure is extremely important to teenagers. Younger children are influenced by peer pressure, but adult approval is even more important to them. To teenagers, peer approval trumps adult approval.
Many parents and teenagers have drawn battle lines, which is intensified when parents are intent on controlling their teenagers. We are saddened by this, because we know it is absolutely impossible to control teenagers; it is too late. The more you try to control them, the more defiant and/or devious they get.
The best way to win the cooperation of teenagers is through mutual respect and equality in problem solving. Family meetings and class meetings teach social responsibility and get them involved in the decision-making process.
When treated with kindness, firmness, dignity, respect and lots of joint problem-solving, teenagers usually fall back on parental values in their twenties—and they will have learned more of the important life skills they need when they are no longer under the authority of adults.

RAISING CHILDREN 14 STRATEGIES PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

10. Connection Before Correction

Making a connection means creating a feeling of closeness and trust before using any of the many respectful and encouraging corrective methods suggested in the Positive Discipline books. Whenever possible, correction includes involving children in focusing on solutions instead of punishing them for mistakes. Effective connections are made when both child and adult feel belonging and significance—even though it is the adult who takes the first steps. Some of these steps to connection are: 1) Listen. Really listen. Stop doing whatever you are doing and give your child your full attention. 2) Validate your child's feelings. Don't we all feel connected when we feel understood? 3) Share your feelings when appropriate. Remember that children will listen to you AFTER they feel listened to. Children feel special when you respectfully share something about yourself. (Respectfully means no stories about "walking miles in the snow.")

It is important to understand that correction the Positive Discipline way is different from conventional correction. Positive Discipline correction respectfully involves children—whenever possible, doing things with them.

A Story from Kavita: Davishan, age 16, was a natural athlete. His parents enjoyed his enthusiasm and encouraged him to channel his energies into sports. The only problem was the level of competition. Davishan was starting to lose the enjoyment of striving by channeling all of his thoughts toward winning. He became distraught for days on end if he did not win.

Calling for a quiet time one afternoon, the father looked his son straight in the eyes with such love and respect that Davishan turned away. After some time, he asked the boy questions about competing and listened to every word the boy had to say. Davishan was afraid his father would stop him from competing. So, he was taken completely by surprise when he asked what Davishan thought they should do to improve his frame of the mind when he lost a game. Davishan offered that he could work more on excelling



Kavita has a correction to make, but is wise enough to first give Dipanjali her full love and attention, and to listen to her daughter's side before warning her about the dangers of being alone. Dipanjali, feeling very grown up at age 10, had walked back from her girlfriend's house unaccompanied in the dark.
.....
and helping his teammates than on winning. Dad liked that, and added that they could work through it together. Only if that did not resolve the behavior problems would they need to consider alternatives.

11. Ask Curiosity Questions

Too often adults tell children what happened, what caused it to happen, how the child should feel about it, what the child should learn from it, and what the child should do about it. It is much more respectful and encouraging when we ask what happened, what the child thinks caused it, how the child feels about it, what the child has learned, what ideas the child has to solve the problem, or how the child can use what she has learned in the future. This is the true meaning of *education*, which comes from the Latin word *educare*, which means "to draw forth." Too often, adults try to "stuff in," instead of draw forth, and then wonder why children don't learn.

One way to get the child engaged is to ask questions that arouse their curiosity. A few typical curiosity questions are:

- What were you trying to accomplish?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What did you learn from this?
- How can you use what you learned in the future?
- What ideas do you have for solutions now?

A Story from Jane: One of my favorite examples is the time my daughter shared with me her intention to get drunk at a party. I gulped and said, "Tell me more. Why are you thinking of doing that?" She said, "Lots of kids do it and it looks like they are having fun." I stifled my temptation to lecture and asked, "What do your friends say about you now, knowing you don't drink?" She thought about this and said, "They are always telling me how much they admire me and how proud they are of me." I continued, "What will they think after you get drunk?" I could see her think before she offered, "I'll bet they'll be disappointed." I followed with, "How do you think you'll feel about yourself." I could tell this question made her think a little deeper. She paused a little longer before saying, "I will probably feel like a loser." This was soon followed by, "You know, Mom, I don't need to get drunk. Thank you for taking the time to help me with this."



Asking the right questions about a sensitive issue can bring mother and daughter closer together. It is good to remember that a child's relationship with the parents can profoundly affect his or her decision-making patterns.



We often nag at our children to do better. We want them to be better because we love them and think they will be happier if they do what we think is good for them. They usually do not hear that we want them to do better for their sake. What they interpret is, "I can never do anything well enough. I can't live up to your expectations. You want me to be better for you, not for me."

Remember that children do better when they feel better. Nothing feels better than unconditional love. Most parents are not aware that they are being unloving when they use punishment. In fact, most parents use punishment in the name of love!

KAVITA: "When talking to children, it can help to get on the same eye level with the child. I found that this simple practice changed my communication with my young son. The hardest part is trying not to break into a smile when I ask him to look into my eyes and he looks left and right trying to avoid my gaze. Once he makes eye contact, I have his full attention. Looking into your child's eyes brings the two of you closer and tunes you into how he or she is feeling in that moment."

Help Children Develop a Sense of Capability

All the concepts taught in Positive Discipline help children develop their sense of capability. Children will not acquire a sense of competence and responsibility if adults keep doing for them what they can and should do for themselves.

Put Positive Discipline to Work in Your Life

If you like the concepts presented in this brief introduction, I strongly urge you to read my *Positive Discipline* book, and then read it again. I guarantee that you will get at least ten times more from it in the second reading. You will see things you totally missed the first time. Once you understand the principles, your common sense and

intuition will enable you to apply them in your own life. I know from personal experience, and from reports from hundreds of parents and teachers, that these concepts really work when used correctly.

Adults have a leadership responsibility to help children develop characteristics that will enable them to live happy, productive lives. It is our job to provide them with a good foundation that they can build upon. Teaching them self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving skills helps them establish an excellent foundation. When children exhibit these characteristics and skills, they feel a greater sense of belonging and significance, which gives rise to positive behavior.

Here is an inspiring testimony that Marianne McGinnis sent me after attending my two-day workshop "Teaching Parenting the Positive Discipline Way." "Your philosophy on living and parenting gives me more hope than anything else I have ever come across. I am truly inspired, and am already incorporating many of the tools—family meetings, remembering that mistakes are opportunities to learn, asking 'what' and 'how' curiosity questions, looking for solutions instead of blame, sharing encouraging messages ('I have faith in you' is my favorite) and always getting the message of love across. Not only are my boys responding with more love and helpful behavior, I can see how encouraged and inspired they are! I'm not shutting them down anymore." I called Marianne and asked her to share her success stories for a podcast. To hear her story, go to www.PositiveDiscipline.com and scroll down to podcast episode 49.

If you find that Positive Discipline isn't working for you, check to see if something is missing or out of balance. For example, problem solving may not be effective if adults or children do not understand that mistakes are opportunities to learn. Family or class meetings may not be effective until people have learned mutual respect and social responsibility. Too much kindness without firmness may



A family has their new car blessed. There are many such opportunities in our religion to reinforce the presence of the Gods and guru in the lives of our children. Guiding them to follow a daily religious routine is a vital part of upbringing.

become permissiveness, and too much firmness without kindness may become excessive strictness.

Sometimes we have to stop dealing with the misbehavior and heal the relationship first. Often the healing involves encouragement that removes the motivation for misbehavior without dealing directly with the misbehavior. Encouragement may not seem to work until adults understand the belief behind the child's behavior by recognizing the mistaken goals.

There is never just one way to solve a behavior challenge. In parent and teacher study groups, participants can brainstorm several possible suggestions based on the principles in the books. The parent or teacher seeking help can then choose the most acceptable suggestion. You can also send questions to my blog, where I post

RAISING CHILDREN

14 STRATEGIES PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

12. Prepare Kids for Success

If you plan to bring your child to the store, a movie, or on any outing, be sure to have a conversation beforehand about the needful behavior of the day. If children know beforehand, it gives you more freedom later to explain consequences and respect. Otherwise, they can simply and truthfully tell you they didn't know any better. Respecting our children creates respect in all aspects. For example, let them know that they can choose only one treat at the store and if they ask for a second treat, the first treat will be put back on the shelf. This limits argument in public places, which often creates frustration in the parent, leading to incidents that are embarrassing and hurtful to all involved.

Story: Every Sunday the Ramdoo family go to the temple for Ganesha puja. Mr. and Mrs. Ramdoo always take a little time to tell Siven, (age 7) and Purna (age 5) that the temple is a special place and to remind them of the expected behaviors inside the temple walls. During their family meeting, they let the children write out a list of things that are OK to do and things that are not OK. Then

they have the children write down a list of things they could do during the puja that would help them to sit quietly. One Sunday, Purna decided to bring her favorite doll to hold, and Siven brought his favorite toy car. He learned in advance that he could not push the car on the floor but he *could* hold it in his lap and play with the tires. Because it was Chaturthi, Siven and Purna also decided to each make five drawings for Ganesha as a gift to Him on His special day.

The family agreed on certain hand signals (not threatening looks) to let the children know without words if their actions were appropriate or not. There were signals of encouragement that made their faces light up! And there was a gesture that warned them that if unacceptable behavior persisted there would be consequences. That was also agreed upon at the family meeting.

TEXT & STORY BY KAVITA MARDEMOOTOO



The twins in the photo are showing the famous thumbs up sign of encouragement that many parents use when children are following the ground rules. Hand signals empower you, the parent, to privately guide behavior in public situations. Be careful not to point fingers at each other, for that is a threatening gesture that is counter to Positive Discipline.

13. Try Limiting the Choices

One of the easiest and yet most powerful tools of Positive Discipline is "Limited Choices." You can actually guide your children through their younger years by letting them make choices for themselves, so that they build character and individuality, while still retaining parental control of the situation.

Try putting two children in a candy store and asking them to choose just one treat! They are overwhelmed by the options. Each watches to see who got the best or bigger treat, and it ends up being a competition, instead of a simple candy treat.

Now try it with "Limited Choices." Tell the children that each may choose two pieces each of two types of candy, one piece for themselves and the other for the sibling. You have let them choose their own, but you have reduced the choices from 50 to two, and you have avoided the competition—all in one sentence. They each end up with four pieces of the same candies.

This strategy can work for just about everything: "Would you like to ring the bell or decorate with the flowers for this morning's puja?"

"Would you prefer a glass of water or a glass of juice?" Avoid asking, "What would you like to wear?" "What would you like to drink?" Such questions invite conflict because the child may say something that you do not agree with.

Story: Before each family dinner or outing, Anuradha chose the appropriate outfit for her son and daughter. She would set out the clothes on the children's bed and inevitably face a storm of protest. One of them almost always ended up crying. One day Anuradha was choosing her own outfit for an important dinner. She asked her husband what he liked. He surprised her by picking out two outfits, then saying that she should make the final decision. She quickly picked her favorite and saw how easy he had made it for her. She realized in that moment that she was frustrating her children by not respecting them enough to let them have a say in their choice of clothes. Soon after, while preparing to go to their cousin's house, she laid out three good choices for each child and left the room. No arguing, no tears!

TEXT AND STORY BY KAVITA MARDEMOOTOO



Kovishan couldn't make up his mind which film to watch one evening. When mom asked him to choose between just two films, he was able to decide!

my answers and advice on a vast array of issues. On-line classes in Positive Discipline are available, and I offer telephone consultation as well.

Positive Discipline is not about perfection. It is helpful to have patience with ourselves and with our children as we work to change old habits. As our understanding of the underlying principles deepens, practical application becomes easier. Patience, humor and forgiveness enhance our learning process. Remember to see mistakes as opportunities to learn when you fall back into old habits. We have found that no matter how many times we react and forget to use the principles of Positive Discipline, we can always go back to the principles and clean up the messes we made while reacting. It is true, over and over again, that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn. Have compassion for yourself when you make mistakes—and learn

from them. I have been learning from mistakes for almost 30 years since I first wrote *Positive Discipline*. I love these principles because they are wonderful guidelines to help me get back on track every time I get lost.

I have presented many new concepts and skills here that will take practice for you to successfully apply to the special circumstances of your family. It can be confusing and discouraging to expect too much of yourself. Apply one method at a time and move ahead slowly, remembering to see mistakes as opportunities to learn. Many parents and teachers have found that even though their children don't become perfect, they enjoy them much more after applying these concepts and attitudes. That is my wish for you.

Dr. Jane Nelsen

14 STRATEGIES PARENTS NEED TO KNOW



14. Hold Weekly Family Meetings

Having weekly family meetings is an important key to creating a loving, respectful atmosphere in the home while helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving skills.

One of the activities is solving problems with cooperation and mutual respect. Solutions must be agreed upon by consensus. A majority vote in a family meeting would accentuate a family division. Convey an attitude of faith in your family that you can work together to find unanimous solutions that are related, respectful, reasonable and helpful.

Planning weekly family fun activities and other events is an important part of family meetings. Family members are more willing to cooperate when they have participated equally in planning events they will all enjoy. Also discuss chores at a family meeting so

that children can help solve the problems of getting them done. They are more cooperative when they can voice their feelings and be part of the planning and choosing.

Choose a chairperson. Children love to be the chairperson and can do a very good job after they reach the age of four or five. This job should rotate. The chairperson calls the meeting to order, starts the group sharing of compliments, begins the problem-solving sessions, and sends the "talking stick" around the circle, which gives everyone a turn to voice an opinion or make a suggestion.

The job of secretary should also rotate among members of the family who are able to write. The secretary keeps notes of problems discussed and decisions made. Family meetings should include a review of the next week's activities. This is especially important as the children grow older and become

Young Kishore and Chandi both look forward to family meetings as a time to be heard, to create new rules that improve life, enjoy the family and talk about any problems that occurred the previous week

involved in many activities, such as babysitting, sports, dates, lessons and so on. Coordinating the calendar for car use and mutual convenience can be essential. Family meetings should not end without planning a family fun activity during the coming week.

End the meeting by doing something together as a family. You might want to play a game together, popcorn or take turns making and serving desserts. Do not watch TV unless there is a program that the whole family looks forward to. If you do watch a program, be sure to end by turning off the TV and having a family discussion about what values (or lack thereof) were portrayed, and how this might apply in your lives.

A Story from Kavita: The Peruman family had four children, ages 2, 4, 10 and 12. Family meetings were always getting interrupted by two-year-old Vijay. He would scream at the top of his lungs and throw toys at the table. The other siblings rolled their eyes as Mother spent most of the meeting time coping with him. Finally, Father asked them for ideas on what to do about Vijay. "Put him in his room!" "Let him cry," "Don't give him any dinner!" came the responses. Mr. Peruman asked them to calm down and think about why Vijay was acting up. Little Anjali (age four) surprised them all by saying, "He just wants to be like us." At that, the others sprang from their chairs, grabbed their little brother with hugs and kisses, put cushions on a big kitchen chair, and placed him there, with everyone, at the table. Enjoying his beaming smile, they gave him a pen and paper, like they each had, and told him to choose the next person to share, while he could take notes (scribbles). As the official co-chairperson at all family meetings, Vijay fit in perfectly.

This expecting couple have found a great help with Positive Discipline, especially while reading about something their three-year-old just attempted last week!

KAVITA MARDEMOOTO

A Full Complement of Child-Raising Resources

BY TARA KATIR, USA

DR. JANE NELSEN, AUTHOR OF *Positive Discipline for Parents* says, "We often act as though we have forgotten that love and joy are the whole point of living and working with children, and find ourselves acting out of fear, judgment, expectations, blame, disappointment and anger. Then we wonder why we feel so miserable." Once the initial bliss of having a newborn child begins to wane, parents discover the hard truth of child rearing—their beautiful baby did not arrive with an instruction manual, and raising him is hard work! As much as you hate to admit it, you may find yourself getting angry, frustrated with your child, then feeling a bit guilty. While there are no pat answers, Jane's collection of Positive Discipline books are an outstanding guide for parents and teachers who are willing to make a concerted effort. In them you will discover how to build a positive relationship with

Positive Discipline Books



Positive Discipline A/V Media



your child, instead of becoming stuck in an endless morass of power struggles, whining and defiance.

In her wide range of books, Dr. Nelsen directly addresses the issues for parents of toddlers, teenagers, parents with "blended" families and parents in recovery from drugs and alcohol. Jane has also written books for teachers to assist them in training stu-

dents, from kindergarten through high school, to become self-reliant, successful adults. There is even *Positive Discipline for Childcare Providers*.

Jane's books can be ordered on her website—www.positivediscipline.com, which is a treasure trove of resources for parents and teachers. There are free articles, an online forum, podcasts, free downloads, e-books and MP3 audios, and information on Positive Discipline Workshops.

The next time you find yourself frustrated by your rambunctious toddler or sassy teenager, give yourself a "time out" and find some inspiration with solutions on the Positive Discipline website. Jane coaxes parents, "It doesn't matter whether you're a teacher, a parent or both.... On this web site, I'm going to show you how to solve defiance, whining, and all the other problem behaviors children and teens use to drive you crazy! And yes, you can do it all without ever blaming or punishing them!"

Why Ancient Cultures Allow Children to Express the Natural Human Emotions, or Rasas

BY VATSALA SPERLING, VERMONT, USA

INDIAN TRADITION RECOGNIZES nine *rasas* as representing our most important and basic emotions: love, joy, wonder, calmness, anger, courage, compassion, fear and disgust. These emotions are universal to mankind. Five are desirable, while four are unpleasant and usually undesirable.

Watch a small child carefully and you will be able to see displays of all nine of the basic emotions: 1) A baby smiles and gazes adoringly at his mother, showing the emotion of *shringara*, charm or love. Overcome with love for the infant, she picks him up, cuddles him and showers him with kisses. This is what the baby wanted, a physical confirmation of mother's presence and love. He

knows exactly how to display his needs by way of facial expressions when he is barely three months old. 2) Laughing when tickled is a child's expression of *hasya*, joyous humor and laughter. Watch him play with a pet. 3) A ladybug lands on his table, walks across, flutters her wings and takes off. The child is wide-eyed with *adbhuta*, wonder or fascination, and has watched every move made by the ladybug. 4) A well-fed and relaxed baby that is asleep does look angelic. He is *shanta*, tranquility or calmness, personified. 5) Children fighting may display *raudra*, anger. 6) A child has learned to climb a ladder and gets a better view. He is feeling very accomplished and *vira*, brave, a hero of his own world. 7) In a hurry, the mother stubs her toe and cries out in pain. A child as young as two will reach out, wipe mom's

tears and touch the injury in an expression of *karuna*, compassion, empathy or mercy. 8) A loud noise startles and wakens the baby and he cries out in fear, *bhayanaka*. This cry is distinct from all other cries. 9) Try spooning a cooked and mashed vegetable into an infant's mouth. As he sniffs, tastes, spits out and makes a horrible face he is expressing *vibhatsa*, disgust, with the new taste, very different from that of milk, his staple diet so far. Besides these, a child can display with equal ease and mastery a few more inherent emotions, such as sadness, greed, selflessness, obstinacy, curiosity, clinginess, generosity, dependency, violence, arrogance and rudeness.

The older, child-centered cultures take a different approach to the display of *rasas* by the powerful beings called children. The parenting techniques followed in many so-called primitive cultures foster attachment, and create such a closeness and bond between mother and child that the mother develops a total acceptance and understanding of her child and his mind. When an entire extended family lives in a one-room longhouse in the rain forest of South America, the adults reach a high level of tolerance to childhood display of *rasas*. They do not expect the child to conform to the expectations of

the adults the moment he opens his eyes to this world. Discipline and assimilation into the community will come later, by way of numerous rites of passage.

In a similar fashion, the child-centered and ancient culture of India takes a very tolerant view of the childhood display of *rasas*. In India they let the children be children. They understand that childhood does not last forever. Soon enough the child will grow up and learn the ways of the world. There is no need to rush the process, to cause premature aging and untimely maturation.

When children have strong emotions, the adults do not feel the need to resort to violent beatings or verbal abuse to suppress the expression those feelings. Such a response would only inflict rejection and social humiliation on children for their natural displays. Adults in these older cultures understand that just as a lion hunts a deer, the child, in all his innocence, is simply following his inborn instincts. He is not acting to please or displease. These adults understand that just as nature expresses herself through her elements, children express themselves through their displays of *rasas*. The display is not the child. It is just a state of mind and therefore is inherently changeable. 🍵



LOVE



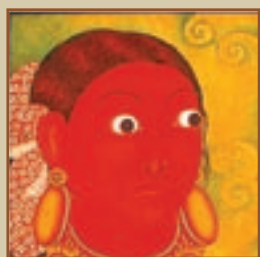
JOY



WONDER



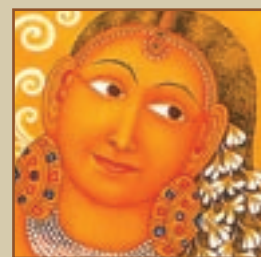
CALMNESS



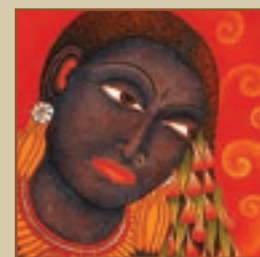
ANGER



COURAGE



COMPASSION



FEAR



DISGUST

Nine innate emotions:

1) Shringara, love, devotion; 2) hasya, joy, humor; 3) adbhuta, wonder, curiosity; 4) shanta, calmness; 5) raudra, anger; irritation; 6) vira, courage; 7) karuna, compassion, empathy; 8) bhayanaka, fear, anxiety; 9) vibhatsa, disgust

What Modern Parents Can Do

BY VATSALA SPERLING, VERMONT, USA

When the display of negative *rasas* by children gets out of hand, there are certain positive things that parents can do:

- ❖ Take a few deep breaths.
- ❖ Commit to loving the child without conditions.
- ❖ Be firm, yet remain flexible to the child's needs of the moment.
- ❖ See the child for what he is—just a small child in need of support.
- ❖ Impose no grown-up values and expectations on the child.
- ❖ See the display of *rasa* for what it is—a little storm in a tiny tea cup, which will calm down eventually.
- ❖ At the peak of the display of negative *rasas*, do not force the child to change his ways or engage with him in a forceful manner. A calm voice and a firm but peaceful demeanor is a stronger weapon than force.
- ❖ At no point are violent, physical punishments, frightening time-outs, deprivation or verbal abuse called for. Such negative devices affect children for the rest of their lives.

How to cultivate positive rasas

Do not, do not, do not suppress, neglect, ignore, put down, discourage, demean or humiliate the child when he is displaying any sign of a positive *rasa*. While excessive praise is detrimental, so are neglect and discouragement.

Focus on cultivating tolerance and patience in yourself. Treat the child as you would expect him to treat you when you grow old, powerless, dependent and needy. Talk to your child about the expression of positive *rasas* when the time is right. In the meantime, just show him by the example of your own behavior how the expression of positive *rasas* brings joy to the family. Set a family time—free from technology—to create an ideal environment for cultivating your child and teaching him about the display of positive *rasas*.

Soon enough you will be able to speak to the child about the universal laws of righteous behavior. Every being has the desire to be treated with love, courtesy, kindness, loyalty, generosity, consideration and warmth. While being taught to extend this treatment to one and all, the child will also need to be told about discretion. For example, loyalty is a good quality but the child must learn to choose his company wisely. If he befriends a drug pusher and becomes loyal to him, his loyalty to this friendship will quickly take him right down the

drain and into the septic tank. This is where discretion comes in.

When all is said and done, nobody can deny that these are challenging times for parents. Rootlessness, alienation, marginalization and anonymity—these are some of the prices parents pay when they move around the world in search of the perfect situation. Young parents are often cut off from their original cultures and societies. Techno-commercial values constantly push parents and children to test one another. In pursuit of their individual ambitions and needs, parents and children often live in separate worlds, albeit in the same household. And when children enter school, the child who has not been given time to be a child, who has not been accepted with tolerance, often ends up in the school nurse's office being tested for and diagnosed with illnesses such as bipolar disorder, ADHD or oppositional defiant disorder.

Harried teachers, under pressure to maintain order in their classrooms and to have their students meet minimum academic standards, expect all of the children to behave like obedient, quiet, perfect little ladies and gentlemen. Children are not allowed to be children. They are not allowed to deviate from the norm or to freely express all of

their *rasas*.

Sometimes as early as the age of three or four, children are labeled with psychiatric diagnoses and begin to be treated with powerful drugs such as lithium or Depakote (mood stabilizers), Risperdal, Seroquel or Zyprexa (atypical antipsychotics), Prozac (an antidepressant) or Ritalin (a drug for ADHD). Each of these drugs comes with a frightening list of side effects. If prescribed without any physical markers, but solely on the basis of behavior—or rather the display of *rasas*—what good (or harm) is being done to the child, the parents and society?

In the face of this, it becomes all the more imperative that parents consider other, more holistic approaches to child rearing. If, as is sometimes the case, the child's display of *rasas* becomes detrimental to his own or his family's well-being, there are scores of other, non-pharmaceutical options available for modifying mood and behavior. His parents might explore changing his diet, limiting his intake of sugar, preservatives and additives. Calming and healing herbs might help. Perhaps homeopathy could shift his energetic balance, or counseling for the entire family could diffuse the situation.

Training a child in classical music, classical dance or martial arts could help. All of

these disciplines have been known to stabilize and channel excessive or disruptive energy in more positive directions. A regular time, free of TV, when family members sit together, work together and converse with one another is also known to provide lasting, positive change for children.

As children grow up and display *rasas*, parents need to continue to grow up as well—not just in the physical manifestations of age, the wrinkles and gray hair, but in wisdom. This is what a study of the display of *rasas* in childhood is all about: a call for parents to monitor the growth of their wisdom. When parents learn to take charge of their own growth in terms of tolerance and empathy and resolve to let children be children first, allowing them an age-appropriate display of *rasas*, they have an opportunity to become truly close to their children and know them in their totality. As children mature, good parents take the initiative for gently channeling their *rasas* at the appropriate time and place. When parents take this positive approach to child-rearing, the options of violent discipline and drug-based treatments become obsolete. While we continue to ponder who is raising whom, learning to flow with the *rasas* will bring about lasting peace and joy in many households.

Finding the Pride

Will my generation be fully absorbed in American culture and forget their Hindu identity?

BY SHEETAL SHAH

IN MANY RESPECTS, I AM YOUR AVERAGE INDIAN-AMERICAN 20-something female. I enjoy Bollywood music and dance as much as hip hop and clubbing. I revel in Indian cuisine as much as I do in pizza. While I love visiting India, I am always relieved to return to the US. And I am Hindu. The fact that I am proud of being Hindu is what separates me, and only a handful of others like me, from most Indian Americans.

The Hindu and Indian identities have been intertwined to such an extent that few today make any reference to their Hindu identity. Most in my generation refer to themselves as *desi* or Indian. From personal experience, at first glance, it is nearly impossible for a Hindu Indian American to define where one identity stops and the second begins. But in writing this article, I realized that it is possible to find that fine line. Growing up in the US, where we are all able to form a strong American identity, it is important to understand that being Hindu and Indian is not the same. Yet so many Hindu Indian Americans today find the distinction inconsequential.

I generalize here, but Hindu Indian Americans seem to fall into one of three categories. First, there are those who are disconnected from being both Hindu and Indian. They have either never been taught or have resisted all efforts to learn an Indian language, enjoy the cuisine, or learn the philosophy of Hinduism. I will leave this group alone as the discourse concerning their "disconnectness" is a different topic altogether.

In stark contrast to the above group are those who embrace both identities. Not only does this group embrace its Indianness, they also have an understanding, appreciation and pride in being Hindu. They have studied Hindu philosophy, acknowledge its importance in the world today and are proud to share it with others. Unfortunately, few of my friends fall into this category.

The final group, which is my focus, are those Hindu Indian Americans who hide their Hindu identity but are proud to display their Indian identity. This group is not only inclusive of those Hindu Indian Americans who have been born and brought up in the US, but also those who are commonly called FOBs ("Fresh Off the Boat"—those who have just recently immigrated). Individuals in this group blast Bollywood music on their stereos, require a weekly quota of Indian food, and in college organize and attend Diwali shows which have lost any religious connotation. Diwali has just become an occasion to stage Bollywood style dances and throw massive after-parties.

While this third group has retained a sense of Indianness, they have resisted or suppressed their Hinduness. So I wonder, if you are Hindu and Indian, why is it ok to be Indian, but not Hindu?

A large reason is that those of my parent's generation arrived from India with very little. They were forced to build a new life in a new country and many of them passed on to their children that which was easiest, the Indianness. Playing Bollywood videos and cooking Indian food is easier than explaining the underpinnings of Hindu philosophy. So, my generation grew up as Indian Americans.



grandchildren of European immigrants who arrived in America much before Indians—they refer to themselves as Americans. My grandchildren will also be 100% American.

Hindu identity is based on a 5,000-year old philosophy of life that is universal. It is not based upon one's birthplace. There is so much to be proud of. Hinduism uniquely teaches a tolerance and acceptance of multiple paths to God through one's unique karma. It highlights the importance of performing one's duty without attaching expectations to outcomes that cannot be controlled. It shows us that while we cannot control the world around us, we can control our senses, and thereby maintain internal calmness. Hinduism brings to the world the ability to control the mind, body, and soul through the practice of yoga. Of the world's major religions, Hinduism is the only one whose explanations of the creation of today's universe are largely compatible with modern day scientific thought. The list is endless. And yet so many Hindu Indian Americans are still not proud of their Hindu identity.

Fortunately, I have been raised to not only be proud of my Hindu American identity, but to ensure its survival. As the full-time Director of Development with the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a non-profit advocacy group, I have made a commitment to help build a national Hindu American voice by interacting with and educating leaders in public policy, media and academia, as well as the general public, about Hinduism and Hindu issues. I left a consulting career to work for HAF because Hindu Americans need a credible voice that is independent of an Indian identity; because without a united voice, our Hindu identity will be lost; and because I am proud to be a Hindu American.

SHEETAL SHAH, 27, based in New York City, is the director of Development for the Hindu American Foundation, focused on fundraising and marketing. She was previously a corporate consultant and taught inner-city students for a year in Boston. She has a Masters in Development Management from the London School of Economics and a B.Sc in Computer Science from Georgia Tech.

In that transition, we lost the other half of our identity. Perhaps, many in my parents' generation did not know Hinduism beyond the ritualistic aspects of puja and attending mandirs. And perhaps growing up in India, surrounded by millions of Hindus, they never needed to question the meaning of intricate rituals. But my generation does. And when we ask "Why?" and are met with ignorance, far from feeling pride in our religion, we shun it. We are embarrassed by it because it is different from our surroundings in America. So when we are asked about the "elephant-headed God," instead of being able to explain the rich symbolism, we shrug it off and change the topic. We are embarrassed because we do not know. In response, we stick with what we do know—being Indian—and we hide our Hindu identity.

Ironically, it is only the Hindu identity that can last for generations. While my parents are staunchly Indian, my own attachment to India is less than my parents, and my children's attachment to India will be even less. As the generations of Hindu Indian Americans progress, that Indian identity will continue to diminish until it disappears altogether. Just talk to the

Facing Dalit Issues

What our Hindu Dalit brothers and sisters want is economic muscle and simple vocational respect

BY ARVIND CHANDRAKANTAN

AMERICAN-BORN HINDUS HAVE VERY LITTLE EXPOSURE to the deep social problems faced by India's Dalit and Harijan communities, who comprise 25% of our Hindu family. But time and again we face burning allegations of caste discrimination within Hinduism. Scriptural documentation of caste in Hinduism is sparse. Most interpretations of caste come from proselytizing Western Christian missionaries. In fact, the origin of the caste supposedly from the four parts of Purusha, the Cosmic Man, can be seen in another light. If Purusha represents the transcendental nature of consciousness, then the brahmin is he who lives eternally in Brahman (enlightened state), the kshatriya is he who fights the practical nature of the duality of the mind, the vaishya is he who teeters towards the tamasic side of the mind but exists in the rajasic state, and the sudra is he who exists in the tamasic state. So before we label one of our Hindu brethren with a caste name, we should delineate our own. Myself and my friend Eswaran wanted to learn about the issues first hand. Here is our interview with Dalit leader, Sri Kalidoss Swamigal, done during our summer 2008 trip to India. He elucidates the pivotal keys needed for change.

What is the form of discrimination faced by Dalit people?

First, the concept of "Dalit" is found not just in the Hindu community. All religions, communities and races have had this throughout



Sri Kalidoss Swamigal

history. To think of it as a Hindu issue is a false concept. Poverty is our primary problem. Our children are unable to benefit from reservations (affirmative actions programs) because they are forced into the work force very early. Reservations for colleges and jobs don't help if you don't even have enough food or water. Until basic amenities are met, reservations can do only so much. Many in our community have done well having those amenities. But, we are 25% of the Hindu population, yet we are still under-represented in several areas because so many of our reservations go unfilled each year.

At a religious level, we often see money flow in from Christian and Muslim organizations overseas to help Dalits, but not from Hindu organizations. This leads many of our community to feel that Hindus do not care about them. The end of casteism would end a lot of problems faced by our community, but it would not help us overcome poverty. If a man has food, water and basic necessities, then he can focus on education and upliftment. Education is the panacea to many problems for all communities, not just for ours. So

many bright young Dalit boys and girls are unable to fulfill their educational goals each year because they are pushed into the workforce at a young age to help provide for their families.

How did the Dalit community come to be? One third of the ancient Saivite Tamil saints were from Dalits.

In ancient times, the caste system was not so stratified. This allowed several members of the so-called "lower" communities to come up. This is well recognized in religious texts from all over India, not only in Tamil classics. Caste classifications became fixed only later.

What is Hinduism to your community?

Hinduism means a lot to our community. Even if people get converted to either Christianity or Islam, it is foreign. You can go to church or mosque for two or three days, but you grew up with Lord Siva, Ganapati and Murugan. So we cannot deny this. Hence many reconvert to Hinduism. Other religions also do not have a track record of treating Dalits well, which is another reason for reconversion.



What is the religious practice within your community? Do you have your own temples and priesthood?

Our practices are no different than any other Hindus. We eat and pray like other Hindus, and our festivals are the same also. There is no subcastes of priesthoods in the Dalit community, and, in fact, there are minimal subdivisions within our community.

How do you see "untouchability" or impure vocations?

There are jobs that the Dalit community do that other Hindus would not do. But to label our jobs as ritually impure is unfair. Even if we clean the temple floor, is this not a service to God? Many people in our community do not resent the work unless it is seen by other Hindus as being a "Dalit" job. These labels create resentment.

What should the Dalit community do to improve its status?

Many Dalits have been very successful over the years, but they don't help other Dalits to come up.

Why are Dalits converted to Christianity and then some reconverting back to Hinduism?

Dalits see Christians coming to help them, and they help to propagate the misconception that Hindus do not care about them. Both are untrue. Dalits who have converted to other religions have not benefitted in any way, and many have converted back to Hinduism in recent years. If you are to struggle, why not struggle with your own religion that you grew up with?

CONTACT: ALL INDIA DALIT HINDU MAKAL AANMEGA SANGAM, SANKRALAYA, 63 MAYOR RAMANATHAN SALAI, CHETPET, CHENNAI, INDIA 600031. HEAD OF THE SANGAM, SRI KALIDOSS SWAMIGAL (INTERVIEW ABOVE) HAS BEEN NOMINATED FOR THE SHRI NARAYANA GURU AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL REFORM GIVEN BY THE HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION AND GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENCE FOR OUTSTANDING WORK TO UPLIFT DALITS. VISIT: [HTTP://WWW.HAFSITE.ORG/HARIJAN_AWARD.HTM](http://WWW.HAFSITE.ORG/HARIJAN_AWARD.HTM)

ARVIND CHANDRAKANTAN, MD, 31, (photo at top) is a physician in Miami who works with the Hindu American Foundation and the Loka Dharma Seva Foundation and Trust.

Vegetarian Myths Debunked

A tale of the hilarious misconceptions omnivores have about vegetarians

EVERY VEGETARIAN REMEMBERS HIS first time. Not the unremarkable event of his first meal without meat, mind you. No, I mean the first time he casually lets slip that he's turned herbivore, prompting everyone in earshot to stare at him as if he just revealed plans to sail his carrot-powered plasma yacht to Neptune.

For me, this first time came at an Elks scholarship luncheon in rural Oregon when I was 18. All day, I'd succeeded at seeming a promising and responsible young man, until that fateful moment when someone asked why I hadn't taken any meat from the buffet. After I offered my reluctant explanation—and the guy announced it to the entire room—30 people went eerily quiet, undoubtedly expecting me to climb on my chair and launch into a speech on the virtues of an anarchic revolution. In the corner, an elderly, suited man glared at me as he slowly raised a slice of bologna and executed the most menacing bite of cold cut in recorded history. I didn't get the scholarship.

I tell this story not to win your pity but to illustrate a point: I've been vegetarian for a decade, and when it comes up, I still get a look of confused horror that says, "But you seemed so... normal." The U.S. boasts more than 10 million vegetarians today, yet most Americans assume that every last one is a loopy, self-satisfied health fanatic, hellbent on draining all the joy out of life. Those of us who want to avoid the social nightmare have to hide our vegetarianism like an addiction, because admit it, omnivores: You know nothing about us. Do we eat fish? Will we panic if confronted with a hamburger? Are we dying of malnutrition? You have no clue. So read on, my flesh-eating friends—I believe it's high time we cleared a few things up.

To demonstrate what a vegetarian really is, let's begin with a simple thought experiment. Imagine a completely normal person with completely normal food cravings, someone who has a broad range of friends, enjoys a good time, is a carbon-based being, and so on. Now remove from this person's diet anything that once had eyes, and, wham!, you

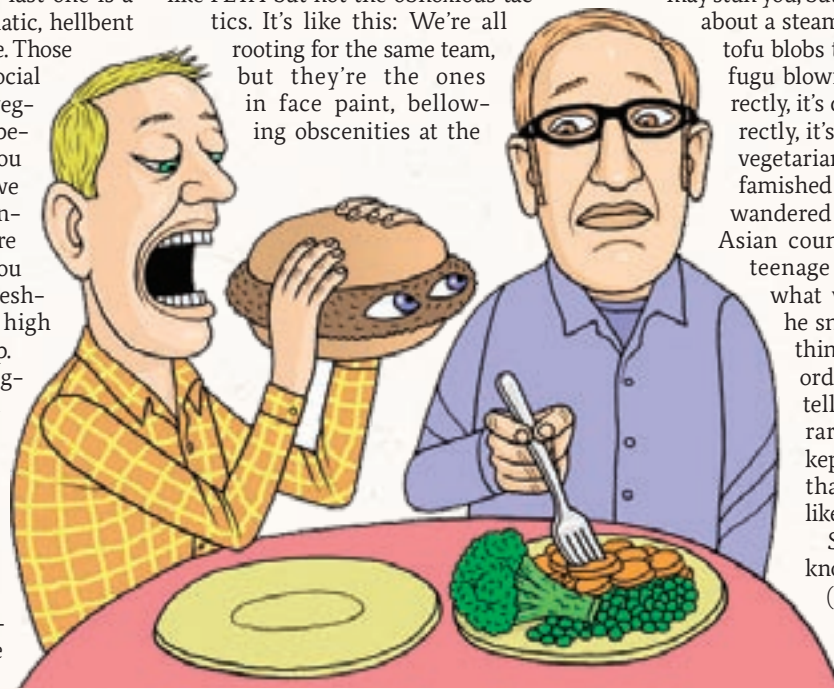
have yourself a vegetarian. Normal person, no previously ocular food, end of story.

Some people call themselves vegetarians and still eat chicken or fish, but unless we're talking about the kind of salmon that comes freshly plucked from the vine, this makes you an omnivore. A select few herbivores go one step further and avoid all animal products—milk, eggs, honey, leather—and they call themselves vegan (pronounced vee-gan). These people are intense.

Vegetarians give up meat for a variety of ethical, environmental and health reasons that are secondary to this essay's goal of increasing brotherly understanding, so I'll mostly set them aside. Suffice it to say that one day I suddenly realized that I could never look a cow in the eyes, press a knocking gun to her temple, and pull the trigger without feeling I'd done something cruel and unnecessary. (Sure, if it's kill the cow or starve, then say your prayers, my bovine friend—but for now, it's not quite a mortal struggle to subsist on the other five food groups.)

I am well aware that even telling you this makes me seem like the kind of person who wants to break into your house and liberate your pet hamster—that is, like a PETA activist. Most vegetarians, though, would tell you that they appreciate the intentions of groups like PETA but not the obnoxious tactics. It's like this: We're all

rooting for the same team, but they're the ones in face paint, bellowing obscenities at the



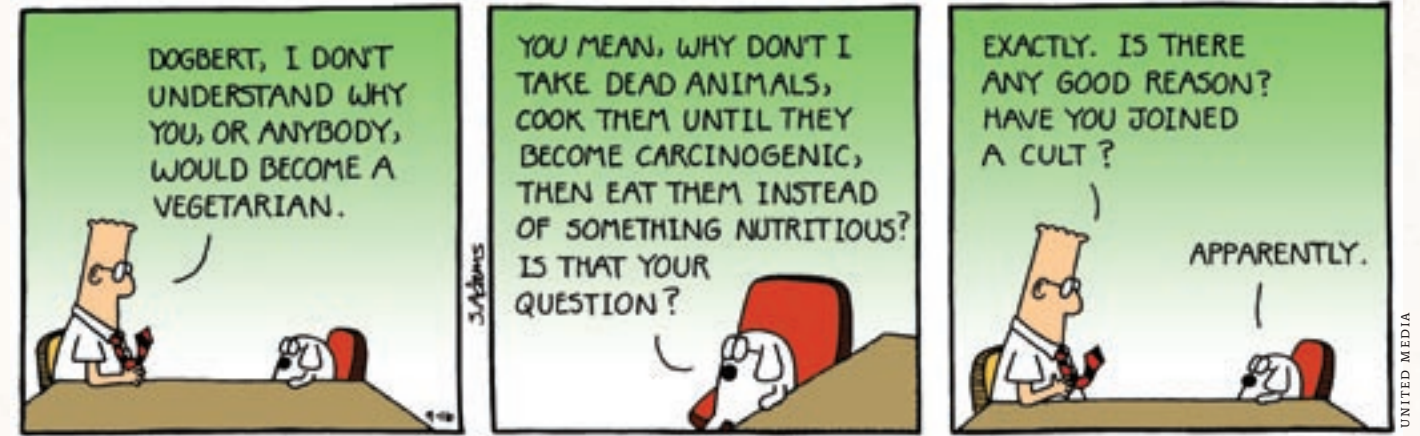
MARK ALAN STAMATY

umpire and flipping over every car with a Yankees bumper sticker. I have no designs on your Camry—or your hamster.

Now, here in America, when I say that vegetarians are normal people with normal food cravings, many omnivores will hoist a lamb shank in triumph and point out that you can hardly call yourself normal if the aroma of, say, sizzling bacon doesn't fill you with deepest yearning. To which I reply: We're not insane. We know meat tastes good to many people; it's why there's a freezer case at your supermarket full of woefully inadequate meat substitutes. Believe me, if obtaining bacon didn't require slaughtering a pig, I'd have a bacon sandwich in each hand right now with a bacon layer cake waiting in the fridge for dessert. But, that said, I can also tell you that with some time away from the butcher's section, many meat products start to seem gross. Ground beef in particular now strikes me as absolutely revolting; I have a vague memory that hamburgers taste good, but the idea of taking a cow's leg, mulching it into a fatty pulp, and forming it into a pancake makes me gag. And hot dogs... I mean, hot dogs? You do know what that is, right?

As a consolation prize we American vegetarians get tofu, a treasure most omnivores are more than happy to do without. Well, this may stun you, but I'm not any more excited about a steaming heap of unseasoned tofu blobs than you are. Tofu is like fugu blowfish sushi: Prepared correctly, it's delicious; prepared incorrectly, it's lethal. Very early in my vegetarian career, I found myself famished and stuck in a mall, so I wandered over to the food court's Asian counter. When I asked the teenage chief culinary artisan what was in the tofu stir-fry, he snorted and scoffed something. Desperation made me order it anyway, and I can tell you that promises have rarely been more loyally kept than this guy's pledge that the tofu would taste like, uh, that word he said.

So here's a tip: Unless you know you're in expert hands (Thai restaurants are a good bet), don't even try tofu. Otherwise, it's your funeral.



UNITED MEDIA

As long as we're discussing restaurants, allow me a quick word with the hardworking chefs at America's dining establishments. We really appreciate that you included a vegetarian option on your menu (and if you didn't, is our money not green?), but it may interest you to know that most of us are not salad freaks on a grim slog for nourishment. We actually enjoy food, especially the kind that tastes good.

So enough with the bland vegetable dishes, and, for God's sake, please make the Garden-burgers stop; it's stunning how many restaurants lavish unending care on their meat dishes yet are content to throw a flavorless hockey puck from Costco into the microwave and call it cuisine.

Every vegetarian is used to slim pickings when dining out, so we're not asking for much—just for something you'd like to eat. I'll even offer a handy trick. Pretend you're trapped in a kitchen stocked with every ingredient imaginable, from asiago to zucchini, but with zero meat. With no flesh available, picture what you'd make for yourself; this is what we want, too.

For those kind-hearted omnivores who willingly invite subversive vegetarians into their homes for dinner parties and barbecues (really! we are not afraid of them!), the same rule applies—but also know that unless you're dealing with a vegetarian who is a unusually demanding person, we don't expect you to bend over backward for us. In fact, if we get the sense that you cooked for three extra hours to accommodate our dietary preferences, we will marvel at your considerate nature, but we will also feel insanely guilty. Similarly, it's very thoughtful of you to ask whether it'll bother me if I see you eat meat, but don't worry: I'm not going to compose an epic poem about your corpse sandwich.

Which leads me to a vital point for friendly omnivore-herbivore relations. As you're enjoying that pork loin next to me, I am not

silently judging you. I realize that anyone who has encountered the breed of vegetarian who says things like, "I can hear your lunch screaming," will find this tough to believe, but I'm honestly not out to convert you. My girlfriend and my closest pals all eat meat, and they'll affirm that I've never even raised an eyebrow about it.

Now, do I think it strange that the same people who dress their dogs in berets and send them to day spas are often unfazed that an equally smart pig suffered and died to become their McSandwich? Yes, I do. Would I prefer it if we at least raised these animals humanely? Yes, I would.

Let's be honest, though: I'm not exactly St. Francis of Assisi over here, tenderly ministering to every chipmunk that crosses my path.



USHA KRIS

Not just salad: Unlike vegetarians of Indian heritage, Americans often struggle to prepare a wholesome vegetarian meal

I try to represent for the animal kingdom, but take a look at my shoes—they're made of leather, which, I am told by those with expert knowledge of it, comes from dead cows. This is the sort of revelation that prompts meat boosters to pick up the triumphant lamb shank once again and accuse us of hypocrisy. Well, sort of. (Hey, you try to find a pair of nonleather dress shoes.)

My dedication to the cause might be

A cartoon view: Dilbert's pet, Dogbert, is surmised to be the alter ego of the cartoon's creator, Scott Adams, a staunch vegetarian

incomplete, but I'd still say that doing something beats doing nothing. It's kind of like driving a hybrid: not a solution to the global-warming dilemma but a decent start. Let's just say that at the dinner table, I roll in a Prius.

Finally, grant me one cordial request: Please don't try to convince us that being vegetarian is somehow wrong. If you're concerned for my health, that's very nice, though you can rest assured that I'm in shipshape. If you want to have an amiable tête-à-tête about vegetarianism, that's great. But if you insist on being the aggressive blowhard who takes meatlessness as a personal insult and rails about what fools we all are, you're only going to persuade me that you're dumb.

When someone says he's religious, you probably don't start the stump speech about how God is a lie created to enslave the ignorant masses, and it's equally offensive to berate an herbivore. I know you think we're crazy. That's neat. But seeing as I've endured the hassle of being a vegetarian for several years now, perhaps I've given this a little thought. So let's just agree to disagree and joyously get on with it.

Because, really, peace and understanding are what it's all about: your porterhouse and my portobello coexisting in perfect harmony—though preferably not touch-

ing. We're actually not so different, after all, my omnivorous chums. In fact, I like to think that when an omnivore looks in the mirror, he just sees a vegetarian who happens to eat meat. Or, no, wait, maybe the mirror sees the omnivore through the prism of flesh and realizes we all have a crystalline soul.

Hey, while you're here: Have I ever told you about anarchism?

BY TAYLOR CLARK, SLATE MAGAZINE



CULTURE

1838: South Indian Dancers Tour Europe

The *bayadères* dazzled the French, delighted the English and influenced some of the leading artists, composers and choreographers of the 19th century

BY DR. KUSUM PANT JOSHI, ENGLAND

TODAY, INDIAN DANCE HAS A DISTINGUISHED place on the world map. Despite its antiquity, the first Indian dance performance in the West took place less than 200 years ago—in 1838—when a group of devadasis set foot in Europe. These temple dancers were popularly known as *bayadères* in France and elsewhere. The word—from the Portuguese *bailadeira*—names an ethnic or folk dancer.

Nineteenth-century Europeans knew about Indian dance through accounts such as *The Travels of Marco Polo*, which included Polo's observations about the devadasis of Malabar in South India. Europeans living in India had also taken a fancy to nautch performances, a popular dance form different from the temple-oriented devadasis.

Western accounts of Indian dance in the 18th century veered from highly posi-

tive (Jacob Haafner) to extremely negative (Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois). The early 19th-century Europeans tended to view India and other Oriental lands and people with wonderment and fascination. Irrespective of whether we call this tendency "Orientalism" or "Romanticism," a wave of curiosity about things Indian swept over Europe. It was on the crest of such a wave that the first troupe of Indian temple dancers was carried over the seas and cast upon European shores.

The French connection

Credit for bringing the troupe to Europe goes to E.C. Tardival, an enterprising French impresario. It was natural that the initiative came from France, which had a special position in Europe as its cultural trendsetter. Alone among the countries of Europe, France had consistently acknowledged, in her own art, the existence of Indian temple danc-

ers. The first European play ever written on devadasis was Antoine-Marin Lemierre's *La Veuve du Malabar* (1770); the first European opera on devadasis was Charles-Simon Catel's *Les Bayadères* (1810); and the first Western ballet centered around an Indian temple dancer was *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, with music by Daniel Auber (1830). Each of these emerged from France. Some of these creative pieces, such as *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*—rechristened as *The Maid of Cashmere*—and Antoine-Marin Lemierre's play—modified and renamed *The Widow of Malabar* by the English writer Mariana Starke (1762–1836)—were later staged outside France.

Tardival could hardly have chosen a better time to present the devadasis in France. In the early decades of the century, French appetite for the exotic East was obvious from the appearance of travelogues and new lit-

The Continent: (left) *The Indian troupe was a hit in France, where their talents were better showcased than in England.*

erature, as well the first French translation of Kalidasa's *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*, entitled *La reconnaissance de Sacountala*. This was written in 1820 by Antoine-Léonard de Chézy, the first European Professor of Sanskrit. With public curiosity further roused by exposure to Western versions of devadasis on the French stage, the time was clearly ripe for the real artists to be showcased before the French public.

Tardival took care to ensure the success of his program. Near the French base of Pondicherry in South India, he found a group of authentic devadasis linked to the Perumal temple of Thiruvanthipuram. He commissioned them for 18 months. The troupe of five female dancers and three male musicians consisted of Tille Ammal, a woman of about 30, and four female dancers under her charge: Amany, 18, Saoundiroun and Ramgoun, both about 14, and Veydoun, just six years old. In contemporary sketches, Veydoun, who appears dressed in clothes identical to the older dancers, looks like a mini version of the others. She was aptly and affectionately described by a French theater critic: "Imagine Cupid dyed in black. Veydoun is the most charming, mischievous and the brightest little devil."

Records indicate that Tardival offered the troupe an excellent pay package, agreeing to give each dancer Rs. 10 per day (a generous sum in those days), plus an additional 1,000 rupees—half at the outset of their engagement and the remainder when they returned to India.

"A sensation of dazzling light..."

Ammal and her troupe arrived in France on July 24, 1838. At Bordeaux, their first port of call, they watched a performance of the ballet, *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*. Even as members of the audience, the devadasis "excited the greatest attention," according to reports. A week later, they gave their first performance, a private one. Soon they arrived in Paris, where they were greeted with lengthy articles in the French media. The excitement augured well for the success of Tardival's ambitious program.

The Parisian response was vividly reflected by the city's prominent theater critic, Théophile Gautier. Regarding the prevailing mood, he wrote: "The very word *bayadère* evokes notions of sunshine, perfume and beauty even to the most prosaic and bourgeois mind. Imaginations are stirred, and dreams take shape. There is a sensation of dazzling light, and through the pale smoke of burning incense appear the unfamiliar silhouettes of the East. Until now bayadères had remained



CLASSICAL COMPOSERS



BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'OPÉRA, PARIS

Critic's choice: (above) *Theater an der Wien* where the devadasis performed; (left) Influential theater critic Théophile Gautier greatly contributed to their popularity; The Theater Royal Adelphi in London



THEATRICAL LONDON

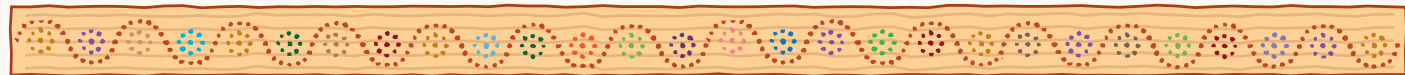
a poetic mystery like the houris of Muhammad's paradise. They were remote, splendid, fairylike, fascinating. This scented poetry that—like all poetry—existed only in our dreams, has now been brought to us." After watching them perform in their residence in Paris, Gautier wrote that they were, "charming, unimpeachably authentic and exactly coincided with the idea we had formed of them."

Rumors that they were imposters vanished after a command performance before France's King Louis Philippe on August 19, where they were showered with gifts from the royal family. Now publicity surrounding the devadasis was so great that there were some real attempts to kidnap them. Tardival lodged them in a secluded but verdant spot by the river Seine in a special bungalow protected by a green shuttered fence with a soldier to guard the entrance. Being a dance

critic, Gautier was permitted into the house and was accorded the privilege of watching the devadasis and their male musicians perform at close quarters.

Gautier wrote detailed descriptions of the dancers, particularly an extremely positive account of the grace, beauty and charm of Amany. From these reports and other sources, including a statuette of Amany crafted by French sculptor Auguste Barre, we can ascertain that the devadasis were adorned in traditional jewelry, including nose rings, bangles, waist belts, ankle bells and silver toe rings.

A distinct picture of the three male musicians of the troupe also emerges from Gautier's reviews and is fully corroborated by contemporary sketches. The grey-bearded dance master (*nattuvannar*) and senior-most member of the troupe, Ramalinga Mudali, conducted the devadasis as he sang, chanted



verses and beat the time (*talam*) with a pair of metal cymbals. The younger musicians, Savaranim and Deveneyagornam, played the bamboo pipes (*tutti*) and the rice-leaf drum (*mattalam*), respectively. (The musicians and their instruments are seen at left in the drawing on page 34.)

The devadasis' first public performance at the Varieties was completely sold out. When a short introductory piece without the devadasis was being presented, the crowd reportedly grew so impatient to see them that the management was compelled to stop the performance and allow the devadasis on stage!

According to an account of their reception in *Journal des Débats*, "Newspapers and magazines were replete with articles about them. Their dancing art was compared to the legendary Marie Taglioni, the ballerina who had played a fundamental role in the rise of romantic ballet with *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*. The dancers of all Europe dance with their feet, but that is all. The bayadères dance in a different manner, with their whole frame. Their heads dance, their arms dance. Their eyes, above all, obey the movement and fury of the dance. Their feet click against the floor; the arms and the hands flash in the air; the eyes sparkle; the bosom heaves; their mouths mutter; the whole body quivers."

Then, perhaps capturing the element of divine inspiration behind their performance, the *Journal*, added: "The dance of the bayadères is something strange, impetuous, pas-

sionate and burlesque. It is a mixture of modesty and abandonment, of gentleness and fury. It is a species of poem in which a Bacchante recites as she runs—a religious drama, which a young priestess delivers without a pause—as the god of the pagoda pursued her to the last."

In addition to public approbation, the dancers were given considerable recognition by French artists. Sculptor Jean-Antoine Barre (1811-1896) made the aforementioned statuette of Amany in a dance pose, based on one of her dance items called Malapou. He also began working on another piece modelled on Saoundiran. "The bayadères," writes Gautier, "are therefore lacking in no type of illustration. Art, society and fashion are all combining to pay tribute to them; they are truly the lions of the season."



Amany: French sculptor Auguste Barre's statue of lead dancer Amany

Across the channel... Reverberations of the success of the devadasis were felt outside France. England was the first to spring into action. The initiative was taken by Frederick Yates, manager of London's Theater Royal Adelphi. Yates had an eye for "novelties," coupled with a fine business acumen. A discerning Scotsman and a comic actor himself, he seems to have sensed that the devadasis had every chance of catering to the British public's thirst for Oriental exotica and the mystique of India. He may have also seen this as a means of recovering the Adelphi's recent investment in refurbishing the theater. Yates

made a quick dash across the English Channel to book the devadasis. His offer—5,000 guineas for the entire season—was accepted, and the Adelphi launched their program on the first day of October, 1838.

The devadasis were presented differently in London than in Paris. At the Adelphi, the first item was a prologue titled: "A Race for a Rarity," a comic piece where Yates, his actress wife and others characterized the way London's leading theater managers had made a beeline to France and were desperate to secure the devadasis for themselves. Then, instead of allowing the devadasis to take over the program, Yates treated them as supporting artists or auxiliaries. Instead of giving them the freedom to present their dance repertoire, their dance plots were cleverly allotted space within popular English themes or frames with a potential to trigger local public interest.

For instance, the devadasis' dance item entitled: "Law of Brahma," or the "Hindoo Widow" was incorporated into a scene set at a Hindu temple within *The Widow of Malabar*, a popular English play about the much-maligned practice of sati. Similarly, they were later on fitted into *Arajoon*, or *The Conquest of Mysore*. This highly popular contemporary drama celebrated the ultimate success of British arms over one of their most implacable enemies—Tipu Sultan of Mysore.

Between October and December 1838, the devadasis gave 55 performances in the Adelphi. In November and December, they also

On the road: This 1830s painting, "Tanjour Nautch," depicts a South Indian traveling dance troupe and their musicians who play cymbals, flute and mridagam, as well as the European violin and bagpipes.



PHOTOS: ITAR-TASS/YURI MASHKOV



danced almost every day in Egyptian Hall on Piccadilly street, in the heart of London.

Some critics were initially skeptical about how the public would respond to them. There was a group of puritans who, presumably influenced by the negative projection of devadasis as "temple prostitutes," expressed fears that their performance might have a baneful impact on the "morals of the spectators." On the opening night, some of these puritans had insinuated themselves into the audience and begun a hissing campaign in an attempt to stir up trouble during the performance. However, as reported in the *London Times*, their efforts failed. The great majority of spectators found everything worth appreciating and absolutely nothing offensive in their dance.

The positive response received from the public was reflected in various reviews of their London premiere. "The Bayadères at the Adelphi have been completely successful, and are drawing crowds of inquisitive spectators," wrote one critic. "We are in raptures with the Bayadères," gushed another in the *Era*. "Until now," he added, "poetry of motion has been a mere term, and grace, a *beau idéal*, existing only in the fancy. These Hindoo girls, however, embody and give life and portraiture to what has hitherto been but viewed with the mind's eye. Their forms are symmetrical to perfection. Every movement is exquisitely graceful, and the animation—the flash and soul which lights up the eyes of the dancers as they execute their fascinating evolutions, is absolutely magical. They are said to have sparked off "a trend among Adelphi actresses of dyeing their hair and eyebrows black, and eating olives, on the understanding that this would darken their skin." The devadasis' success in London led to tours both within and outside Britain. Before leaving for Europe, they also performed in Brighton.

Though popular, their Adelphi program in the long run did not reap a rich harvest for Yates. Some forty years later, Yates' son recollected caustically, "They were utterly uninteresting, wholly unattractive. My father lost

£2000 by the speculation. In the family they were known as the 'Buy-ern-dears' [not bayadères!] ever after." It seems that, although their exoticism attracted the English public, their fascination was ephemeral. Without an introduction to even the bare basics of Indian culture and arts, audiences were simply not equipped to appreciate Indian temple dancing and music, much less to understand its profundity, meaning or intricacies.

A similar fate awaited the devadasis on their European tour, which included Germany, Austria and Belgium. In Vienna, then under Emperor Ferdinand, they were presented at the Theater an der Wien, billed as "Bayadères and their Partners." Sadly, the Viennese public failed to respond positively. Apparently due to the troupe's outlandish appearance, unusual complexion, clothes, jewelry, makeup, tattoos, music and style of

Ballet: Scenes from *La Bayadère*, a Russian ballet with little influence from actual Indian dance by Marius Petipa, first staged in 1877. Set in India, the story revolves around the temple dancer Nikiya and her love for the warrior Solor, who is betrothed to the princess Gamzatti (at left). The ballet remains quite popular, especially for "The Shades," a surreal scene of pure classical ballet (at right), which is often performed independently.

dancing, the Austrian press is reported to have gone to the extent of heaping ridicule upon the devadasis.

Nevertheless, they stirred the creative energy of some outstanding Austrian composers and artists. The same year that witnessed the failure of the devadasis in Austria also saw Johann Strauss I (1804-1849) creating his "Indianer Galopp" under their inspiration. A *galopp*—named after a horse in a hurry—is a ballroom dance which later evolved into the polka. Similarly influenced, dance music composer Josef Franz Karl Laner (1801-1843) composed his "Malapou Galopp," a love-dance of the Bayadères. Both were well-received and are still extant. Further afield, conspicuous, tangible outcomes of the long-term impact of the devadasis included Gautier's massive ballet *Sacountala* (1858), choreographed by Lucien Petipa (1815-1898) and Lucien's brother Marius Petipa's (1818-1910) highly spectacular ballet *La Bayadère* (see photos at top of page).

Conclusion

The devadasis were a huge public sensation all over Europe, but the masses were unused to their culture and the profundity of Indian classical dance and music. The true devadasis soon slipped out of public memory and vanished into the limbo of history, and yet European artists continued to strut across the Western stage playing imaginary devadasis for years to come! It was only after the dawn of the new century that Indian dancing would once again draw public attention in the West.



London: Ad placed by Adelphi Theater in The Times in 1838 for the Bayadères

Hindu Encyclopedia Released

A Ramakrishna swami devoted three decades to crafting this cogent and readable religious reference

BY CHOODIE SHIVARAM, BENGALURU

AFTER THIRTY-THREE PATIENT YEARS OF research and writing, Swami Harshanandaji, head of Sri Ramakrishna Math in Bengaluru (as Bangalore is now known), has released *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Alphabetically arranged, the three-volume work covers the gamut of all things Hindu, from scripture, philosophy, mythology, festivals, rituals and sacraments, to pilgrim centers, archaeology and lives of great saints.

The collection runs a total of 2,064 pages. Illustrations are sparse—a few hundred line drawings and black-and-white photographs—but each volume has several pages of color photos at the back. The set is priced at Rs. 1,500 in India (e-mail: rkmbblr_public@vsnl.net) and about \$150 in the US (temple@sfvedanta.org). It has sold briskly since its release in April, 2008. (If you search for the book online, do not confuse it with Klaus K. Klostermaier's popular single-volume work of the same title, published in 1998.)

"The encyclopedia is written in such a simple style that even an undergraduate student can understand it," Swami Harshananda told me. His writing is indeed lucid and accessible. For example, in concluding a two-page article on "mind," he writes, "The main purpose behind the study of the mind [in Hinduism] is to facilitate its ultimate purification leading to the Realization of the Atman or the Self. Though there are differences of opinion regarding its nature, the processes of purification are almost universally accepted."

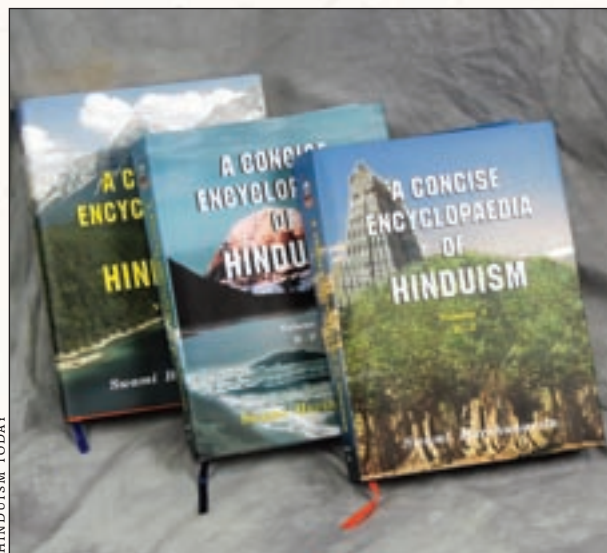
Swami, now in his late 70s, first came in contact with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in 1948 and joined the Ramakrishna Order. He hatched the plan for an encyclopedia of Hinduism in 1973 and started work in earnest two years later. He spent a year assembling topics, then commenced writing about them alphabetically by hand.

The most difficult entries, swami confides, were those of lesser-known philosophical systems. "Unless I understood them per-

fectly," he explained, "I didn't want to put them in writing. For instance, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Achintya Bheda Abheda School and even Madhvacharya's philosophy are quite tough. I had to study these systems and present them in a noncontroversial way."

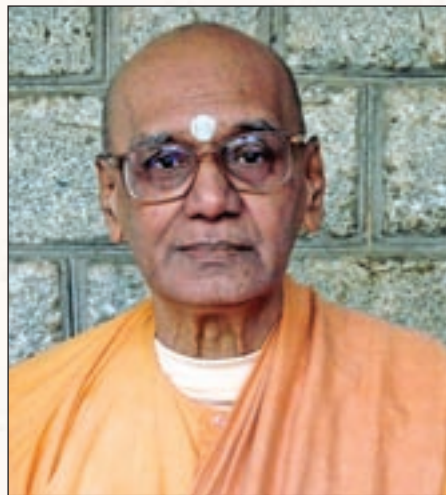
In the early years of the project, his duties as head of the Bangalore Ramakrishna Mission took up much of his time. "Later on," he said, "as our monastic members became more senior, they were able to take greater responsibilities and—except for some policy matters—I was able to devote more time to the work. Generally, I would devote about three or four hours a day. Periodically, I would go to a small meditation retreat we have in Shivanhalli village for a week at a time and write up to ten hours a day. It was all done by the grace of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, to whom I have dedicated the work."

Asked what his conclusion was after completing such a comprehensive study of



All you need to know: Swami Harshananda's lifetime of study resulted in these three useful and lucid volumes

Hinduism, Swami responded: "After going through so many books and studying the subjects properly, I came to the conclusion that ours is a very great religion, a very wonderful religion. There is nothing that is wanting in it. It is like Sri Ramakrishna said of a mother feeding her various children. The



The author: Swami Harshananda, who joined the Ramakrishna Mission in 1948

basic materials are the same—rice is there, sugar is there, dal is there, milk is there. The mother of the house, depending upon the capacity of the children, prepares different dishes from these same ingredients. Just so, Hinduism has also given various methods of philosophical systems of sadhana (spiritual disciplines) and *upasana* (worship). Ultimately, all of them lead to the same sense of experience. Suppose I don't like advaita, the nondualist philosophy. Then there is dvaita, dualism, or *vishishtadvaita*, between the two. If people are serious and sincere about their

personal ethical and spiritual life, there is plenty of material in our religion. There is no need to search for it elsewhere. Hinduism is not a bundle of superstitions. It is a quite well organized, scientific religion. It was discovered and rediscovered by the various sages through contemplation and meditation. Only then they gave it to us. That is why our philosophical systems are called *darshanas*. They are not just intellectual philosophical systems. *Darshana* means seeing and experiencing. Through prayer and meditation they experience it and are able to see the truth through the inner eye and then present it in the way people can understand."

Swami brings a love and respect to his subject which sets this encyclopedia apart from many produced by Western academics. Readers may, however, find his coverage of most topics necessarily but exasperatingly brief, and treatment of recent Hindu figures is spotty. Most importantly, there is no index to enable readers to cross-reference topics. That said, the book is a remarkable, useful and reliable reference, written by one who has a lifetime of first-hand knowledge and appreciation of Hinduism.

BOOK REVIEWS

India's Women

BY TARA KATIR, WASHINGTON, USA

Stephen Huyler is well known to us from his previous books on India: *Village India*, *Gifts of Earth*, *Meeting God—Elements of Hindu Devotion* and *Painted Prayers*. His newest book, *Daughters of India—Art and Identity*, is visually beautiful, emotionally sensitive and an intelligent look into the everyday lives of twenty Indian women, of several religions and living in various locations throughout India and abroad.

Huyler writes, "The women of India have long been misperceived in the West. Abuse towards women pervades Indian society, as it does in many parts of the world, but this abuse must be regarded with its own context. Much of Western reportage about Indian women is misinformed or misguided, depicting all or most of them as victims. Terrible inequities within Indian society must be addressed and changed, but it is essential that Indian women also be recognized for their strengths and for the phenomenal abilities to rise above adversity. India's cultures are contradictory—a fact epitomized by the conflicting attitudes towards women."

Huyler's work is an attempt to correct these



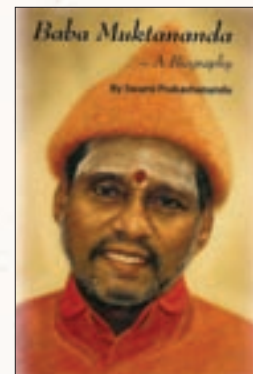
misrepresentations while giving a voice to some of India's five hundred million women. Through their words and his amazing photographs, he has captured their strength and profound dignity. Some may view the stories and see these women as victims. However, Mr. Huyler says, "The chapters are not profiles of victims, but of women demonstrating strength, fortitude, dignity and spirit." Complete with full color photographs, *Daughters of India* is an extraordinary look into their lives. This book should help to bring understanding and respect to the most significant part of Indian society today, her women.

DAUGHTERS OF INDIA—ART AND IDENTITY, ABBEVILLE PRESS PUBLISHERS (WWW.ABBEVILLE.COM), 137 VARICK ST., NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10013, PGS 263, \$65.00

A Biography of Muktananda

Swami Prakashananda's book *Baba Muktananda—A Biography* looks into the life of an extraordinary human being. Swami Muktananda Paramahansa, affectionately called Baba by his devotees, was known by millions worldwide at the time of his Mahasamadhi in 1982. Swami Prakashananda has written a compelling portrait of this saintly soul. From his mother's devout prayers at the Manjunath Siva Temple in Mangalore, South India, seeking Siva's Grace for a child, to Baba's world travels, Swami provides us an intimate look into the life of this modern-day saint.

Baba was born May 16, 1908. By the age of 15 he had frequently seen the sadhu Nityananda, who lived an austere life in the Kadri Hills of South India with a sect of Natha yogis. An intense face-to-face meeting



took place in 1923, changing the course of Baba's life. A deep yearning for a life of spirituality took precedence, and he left home forever to pursue an inner journey.

Swami's account of Baba's early life is interspersed with amazing stories of Nityananda, (who would become Baba's guru) life at Ganeshpuri, and Baba's travels throughout India and the United States. Included in this marvelous biography are many precious

black and white photos of Baba and his guru, Nityananda.

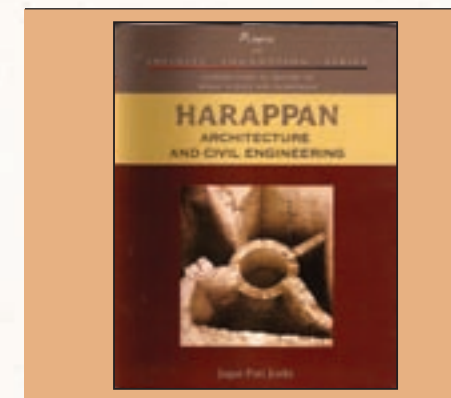
Baba's spirituality inspired thousands of people. Through Swami's book, that darshan continues to flow to the world

BABA MUKTANANDA—A BIOGRAPHY BY SWAMI PRAKASHANANDA, SARASVATI PRODUCTIONS, 1625 HOLLINGSWORTH DR., MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA 94040. E-MAIL: EMAIL@SARASVATIPRODUCTIONS.COM 382 PGS, \$23.95

Gifts of the Harappans

We come now to an archeological study that showcases the ingenuity, creativity, science and technology of the past: *Harappan Architecture and Civil Engineering* by Jagat Pati Joshi. The Harappan civilization flourished during the 3rd and 2nd millennia bce, reaching its peak around 2600, shortly after the development of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Professor Joshi writes, "Like the other Old World Civilizations, the Harappan civilization seems to have grown from the skillful utilization of the fertile river systems and their valleys in the northwestern region of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Systematic town planning, fortification of citadel, elaborate drainage system the idea of establishing granaries and surplus economy, standardization of brick sizes, weights and measures, geometric instruments (e.g. right angles, linear scale and plumb bob) are the principal gifts of the Harappans to succeed-



ing cultures. It was the Harappans who gave the idea of welfare of the workers for the first time. Different types of hydraulic architecture is another legacy of the Harappans, besides many others in social, economic and religious fields."

Illustrated with maps, drawings and photographs, this scholarly study is a fascinating and long overdue look at this ancient civilization. The Western educational view has focused on Mesopotamia and Greece as the "cradle of civilization," ignoring the larger and equally advanced civilizations in the Indian subcontinent and China. This biased view of history is coming to an end. The Infinity Foundation's support of Professor's Joshi's academic efforts is applauded, as is the work itself, which is available at Amazon.com.

HARAPPAN ARCHITECTURE AND CIVIL ENGINEERING BY JAGAT PATI JOSHI RUPA & CO., 7/16 ANSARI ROAD, DARYAGANJ, NEW DELHI 110 002, INDIA, 218 PGS, \$15.11

Avoiding Food Allergies

A seldom recognized condition can be countered with a healthy diet and Ayurvedic remedies

BY DR. VIRENDER SODHI

A FOOD ALLERGY OR SENSITIVITY IS AN ADVERSE REACTION to the ingestion of a particular food. It may be caused by a protein, a starch or by a contaminant found in the food, such as today's ubiquitous colorings, preservatives, chemicals, pesticides and insecticides. It is estimated that 12 million Americans have food allergies, and the numbers are rising. Today, six to eight percent of children under the age of three have food allergies. Nearly four percent of adults live with them. In my own clinical experience, I have found the occurrence of food allergies and sensitivities to be even higher. It is a little-known fact that food allergy causes roughly 30,000 emergency room visits per year in the United States and, tragically, almost 200 deaths.

Although an individual could be allergic to any food, even fruits and vegetables, eight foods account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnut, cashew, etc.), fish, shellfish, soy and wheat. The most common food allergies in children are caused by milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts and wheat.

Food allergies are associated with a multitude of symptoms and can result in a seemingly endless list of illnesses: chronic diarrhea, duodenal ulcer, gastritis, irritable bowel syndrome, malabsorption, ulcerative colitis, nephrosis, chronic infections, anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, inability to concentrate, insomnia, irritability, mental confusion, seizures, bursitis, joint pain, low back pain, asthma, chronic bronchitis, wheezing, acne, eczema, hives, itching, skin rash, arrhythmia, edema, fainting, fatigue, headache, hypoglycemia, itchy nose or throat, migraines and sinusitis.

What causes food allergy? The condition is often inherited. When both parents have allergies, there is a 67% chance that the children will also have them. In cases when only one parent is allergic, the chance of a child being prone to allergies is still high, almost a third. Other factors include constant exposure to a certain food, improper digestion and poor integrity of the intestinal barrier. In fact, allergenic foods are often among those we crave the most.

We are exposed to environmental pollution and to food chain pollution, with genetically modified food, hazardous chemicals in our water and an increased intake of packaged food. These are new challenges to the body, and our immune system does not cope well with them, creating a background for allergies and sensitivities.

In its classic form, a food allergy occurs when an ingested food molecule acts as an antigen—a toxin or other foreign substance that induces an immune response, producing antibodies, our body's guardian cells. Antibodies are protein molecules, made by white blood cells. They bind themselves to foreign substances, in this case the food antigens. These food antigens may cause the release of histamines, which cause swelling, inflammation and an array of different signs and symptoms.

Lactase deficiency is a common cause of food intolerance, in which a person can experience bloating, abdominal pain and diar-



elimination diet. Diagnosis is confirmed by more objective skin tests, blood tests or food challenges.

An elimination diet is commonly prescribed to help mitigate food allergies. Commonly eaten foods are eliminated and replaced with hypoallergenic foods. A standard elimination diet consists of rice, mung beans, lentils, banana, apple and a cabbage-family vegetable. It is extremely important that no allergenic foods be consumed in this diet.

In such cases, I often prescribe herbs like pippli three times a day to help increase the secretions of gastrointestinal tract. Trifal is helpful, eliminating the toxic load and at the same time restoring the lining of the gut back to normal. I also advise curcumin 250 mg three times per day. Curcumin helps to stop the inflammation. In addition, it is good to have coconut milk, which contains mostly medium chain triglycerides. It is helpful as a food and boosts the colonic bacteria. Probiotics are added to help the gut to recover its gut flora back to normal.

The patient stays on the elimination diet for at least one week, and up to one month. After the elimination-diet period, individual foods are reintroduced every two days. Reintroduction of allergenic foods will typically produce a more severe or recognizable symptom than before, allowing us to identify the root causes.

We can keep ourselves free from food allergies. Create a relationship with your food. Eat real food, in its original form, which has been minimally processed or altered. If bugs avoid it, it probably is not good for you either. Eat slowly and chew your food properly. Do not exercise right after eating. Also, avoid drinking much water with food, as it dilutes your gastric juices. Water is better in-between meals. Eat food which is available in season which has been organically or naturally grown.

Remember, good food is a wonderful friend to our health.

DR. VIRENDER SODHI holds an M.D. (Ayurveda) from India and a N.D. from Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine, USA. E-mail: drsodhi@ayurvedicscience.com. Web: www.ayurvedicscience.com

rhea when drinking milk. Intolerance to gluten (a component of wheat, rye, barley, kamut and spelt wheat) occurs as a disease called gluten-sensitive enteropathy. In a common phenomenon called cross-reactivity, a person with a history of reacting to a certain food, such as shrimp, may also develop an intolerance to related foods, in this example crab, lobster and crayfish.

The most common food allergy symptoms are sometimes due to other causes. Some foods contain histamine readily available and cause effects that mimic food intolerance. Histamine can reach high levels in cheese, some wines and certain fish. Common compounds most frequently tied to adverse reactions that can be confused with food allergy are yellow dye number 5, monosodium glutamate (MSG) and sulfides, which occur naturally in some foods but are added to others to enhance crispness or prevent the growth of mold. Some people have a food intolerance with a psychological origin.

To correctly diagnose a real food allergy, a doctor first must determine if the patient is having an adverse reaction to specific foods. The doctor makes this assessment with the help of a detailed history from the patient, the patient's dietary diary or an

Convey the Teachings!

It is up to us to explain Hinduism to the brilliant new generation. They are interested!

BY SRI JAYENDRA PURI MAHASWAMIJI

During a recent visit to the US, Swamiji visited Kauai's Hindu Monastery, where we took the opportunity to interview him about the impressions American Hindus had left on him.

What did you see in young Hindus raised in America?

I have spoken to young children in my recent visit to America, from six-year-old Hindus to teenagers. A girl from Jersey City, who was silent while her parents avidly interacted with me, is a good example. After the formal ceremonies, the girl came forward and asked me many questions. She actually had listened intently to what I explained during my *pada puja satsang* and brought good questions that related to her personal life.

The questions of the average youth about spiritual matters are very deep now, more so than a few years ago. An eleventh-grade boy asked me, "Swami, have you seen God? And if you have, can you explain it to me? I don't seem to believe that there is any God." On this trip I have come across many of this age who have similar questions about God, questions that usually would surface only later in life.

I recently talked for a long time to that young seeker of Truth. He had been through the Western, modern education system, so I used *takashastra*, logic. I told him, "You have seen this building where we are sitting now. Naturally you presume that there is a builder. From a particular machine, you presume there is a manufacturer and some systematic intelligence behind it. So can you imagine such a wonderful creation as our world, consisting of so many real ideas, so many species and you and me, that doesn't have an intelligence behind it? You cannot." He hesitantly said, "Yes, yes." So, I continued, "Inside of you there is some power which is making you move. Inside me there is the same power, making me speak. A car cannot move without energy. Similarly with my body and yours. But what is this power?" He analyzed my arguments little by little. When I said the sum of all actions and all ideas and all power is God, he was convinced and sighed, "Now I know there is a God."

How can we encourage them to attend the temples?

Temple worship, so central to our religion, is something we have to carefully explain. The first step for the young to understand the value of temple worship is to meditate upon "*janma mrithu jerra riadi*," meaning "the reason for their earthly birth." Why are we born? And is death in our hands? And during old age, can you stop decay and disease? Such is life, we are all afflicted with these things without knowing why. Not only this, but all of us are internally inspired to find something meaningful. That propels us to realize something beyond us, some shakti beyond us.

How to connect ourselves with this shakti? I ask the children and the youth, "Are you always successful in whatever you do? No, it's not like that. You don't control everything. You know that there is one factor which is not in our hands: the divine power." Temple

worship will give you more power to achieve things in a better manner—not only material things, but to go further and find out the meaning of life.

It is common for me hear, "Why do we need temples? Isn't the *murti* just a statue? Our elders say that God is present everywhere." They deserve good answers. I explain with an analogy. Sunlight is everywhere but the Sun, in spite of its mighty heat, cannot burn even one small piece of paper under normal circumstances. But get one magnifying glass, keep one piece of paper below it and then let sunlight pass through. The paper will go up in flames. It happens not because of the glass, which is simple, uncomplicated and costs just a few dollars, but because of the sunlight it intensifies. Similarly, God is, by some technical means, brought into the temple to bless us, the *jivas*. That is done by a *pranapratishta* (ritual consecration) of the murti and by Sanskrit mantras. The difference between Sanskrit and normal language is crucial; it creates greater impact. Mantras are selective sound vibrations experienced by rishis over thousands of years.

What else is important to explain to the next generation?

When I talk to our youth, I also pass on the respect for our ancient sages. I say to them, "How can you believe in the existence of the rishis? Rishis are great people, like sage Vedavyasa, who have given us spiritual knowledge." I myself have never seen a rishi, but I believe in them. To make my point, I inquire, "Have you seen the *Mahabharata*? Have you seen the *Ramayana*? Can you write a book like that? Could you write one particle of the *Mahabharata*? Just read them and see the power of the rishis. They are spiritual scientists."

I often explain two important Hindu practices, *sadhana* and meditation. *Sadhana*, daily spiritual practice, begins only when you are clear about your goal. When I ask, "Are you satisfied with what you are doing?" I often hear, "We are living, just like everybody, achieving things." But I ask, "Is that all? What is the purpose of life?" Most will say it is happiness. But is there such a thing as unwavering happiness? When you discover you need God to be your goal, then you begin true *sadhana*. Then comes meditation, or *dhyanam* in Sanskrit. It is a continuous flow of mental energy in one direction. For beginners, I suggest meditating on Lord Ganesha's white form. The moment we have the mind flowing to Lord Ganesha's white form, detached from all other colors or thoughts, one thing ties to another in a seeker's mind.

When I am asked how to reach a deeper state of meditation, I explain that one needs a guru for that. I say, "You have done your practice many times, but your mind is still wavering." One needs help to reach the source of the mind, which is the source of everything. What I can understand, a child maybe will not. Similarly, we cannot understand what an advanced yogi sees, but we hear about it from him. He helps us awaken our positive energies with discipline, and he makes us proceed toward realizing God.

SRI JAYENDRA PURI MAHASWAMIJI is the *guru mahasannidhanam* of Kailash Ashram in Bengaluru, successor to his guru, the late Sri Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamikal, Hindu of the Year 2003.



DIGITAL DHARMA

ARCHEOLOGY

Archaeos Opens a Digital Window on Fabulous Vijayanagara

SINCE WE FIRST WROTE ABOUT this site in 2001, Archaeos completed two more years of mapping the renowned city of Vijayanagar in South India. In the 15th century, this Hindu "City of Victory" was possibly the largest city (650 sq. km.) in the world. It was ruthlessly destroyed 450 years ago by Muslim armies. The Archaeos Vijayanagar Mapping Project (www.archaeos.org/vmp/) was conducted from 2001-2003. From fields of rubble, Archaeos has captured remarkable views of a civilization whose influence reached the far shores of Indonesia and Vietnam and changed the world. Archeos tried to answer some key archeological questions. How big was the city? What size were the complexes? What were they used for? The proj-

ect result web site contains panoramas, photos, PDFs of archeological reports and videos. Be sure to go through each link. At the "Features" link, stop and click on every view to see closeups of carvings, walls, enclosures, tools, etc.

Only a limited area of the ruins has been designated for conservation. The Archaeos mapping project has proved that the extent of the city is much greater. "It is hoped that the work will aid in the preservation of the site as a whole, known as 'Group of Monuments at Hampi' on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. It covers zones not currently protected or designated for excavation and provides another perspective on more areas within this culturally rich and lively yet endangered site."



Above is a frame from one of the eleven panoramas that survey the ruins of one of history's earliest cities



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Magical Neem

NEEM IS INDIA'S MIRACLE TREE *Azadirachta indica*. The Neem Foundation (www.neemfoundation.org) has become a veritable people's movement, with a high

tech Web 2.0 site and a mission of "Greening India with neem." The site explains the tree's many uses and its history in India, its importance to ecosystems, natural medicine, animal health, organic farming, pest control and economic potential.

While sharing information on a magical plant that cures many ailments, prevents

pregnancy and repels pests, the Neem Foundation also shows viewers how to get involved, using the neem tree as a focus for environmental activism.

The mission statement on the "Who Are We" page says it all: "Neem Foundation is a voluntary, independent, non-profit organization. More importantly, it is a people's movement—an initiative that involves ordinary citizens of the world, a forum for individuals and institutions who would like to make a difference. "It is a platform for people, who would like to see the world return to nature for answers; who would like to lend their might to fight poisoning of our soil, pollution of air and ground water, and desertification. The Neem Foundation strives to popularize simple, natural solu-

tions and help people raise their voices until the authorities respond to stop the exploitation of the earth by commercial interests. It is the apex body of all neem movements around the world."

Don't walk, but fly to this site to find out what you can do. And plant a Neem tree today!

Hindu Heritage Endowment

PRIEST’S FUND SUPPORTS SATGURU’S MALAYSIA TRAVEL

Whenever Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami of the Kauai Monastery goes to Malaysia, a Hindu priest and astrologer from Ulu Behrang, Parak helps pay for his travel.

The priest’s son, Selvanathan Jothiswarar of Kuala Lumpur, says his father combines generosity with practicality. “He says that when it comes to swamis, instead of giving what we like, it’s important to give what they need,” Mr. Selvanathan stated.

His father, also named Jothiswarar, helps offset an unavoidable expense. Though Veylanswami spends most of the year on the island of Kauai where he overseas a monastery-temple and its publication operations, his duties require travel throughout North America and Asia. He regularly holds pilgrimages, gives talks and conducts ceremonies in Malaysia, India, Mauritius, Canada, Singapore and elsewhere.

The elder Jothiswarar first started supporting Malaysian travels for Veylanswami’s predecessor, the late Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva). Mr. Jothiswarar would ask the trip organizers how he could help and then charge Gurudeva’s hotel and travel expenses to his credit card, making the holy visitor a guest to his nation.

“Dad then got the idea of starting an endowment fund for Satguru’s Malaysian travels,” Mr. Selvanathan recounted. His father established the Kodiswara Satguru Malaysia Travel Fund at the Hindu Heritage Endowment, naming it after his grandson Kodiswara who had been named by Gurudeva. In Mr. Selvanathan’s view, “It was as though Gurudeva himself had named the fund.”

Mr. Jothiswarar’s personal journey was not an easy one. After being orphaned at age five, he was adopted by a Sri Lankan family. He received training in astrology and the priesthood in Sri Lanka. He left his adoptive family at age 16, finally marrying and settling in Ulu Behrang. He became active in politics and, with the help of a government grant, built a Tamil school and a Lord Subramanya temple on a nearby estate in 1967 and a Lord Ganesha Temple in Ulu Behrang in 1975.

Gurudeva visited the temple in 1983 and, according to Mr. Selvanathan, had a vision of Lord Ganesha listening to his father who by now was known throughout Malaysia as one of its leading astrologers.

Now 75, Mr. Jothiswarar is twice a recipient of the government’s Distinguished Conduct Medal (Pingat Pekerti Terpilih) and the Meritorious Service Medal (Pingat Jasa Kebaktian) for his social service work. His son, Mr. Selvanathan, has followed his father’s example and established the Rani Jothiswarar Memorial Fund (fund #66) at HHE in honor of his late wife (see Hinduism Today Oct-Nov-Dec 2008.) The fund supports the retreat facilities for the monks at Kauai’s Hindu Monastery.

An engineer by profession, Mr. Selvanathan now works as an astrologer in Kuala Lumpur and regularly assists his father with the Ganesha Temple prayer services in Ulu Behrang.

For information about the Kodiswara Satguru Malaysia Travel Fund or to establish your own fund, contact Shanmuganathaswami at hhe@hindu.org. To donate to this fund, visit www.hheonline.org.



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Bodhinatha with Selvanathan (top center) and his father, Jothiswarar (right)

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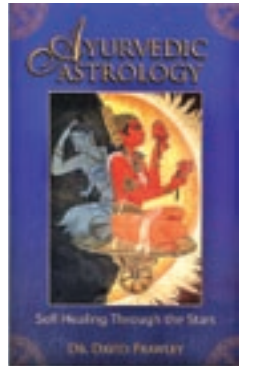
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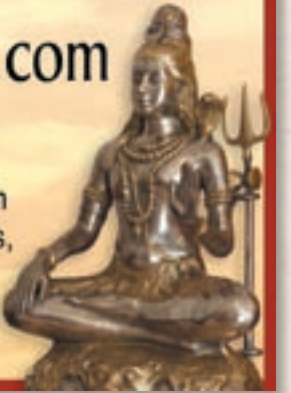
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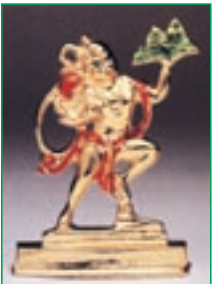
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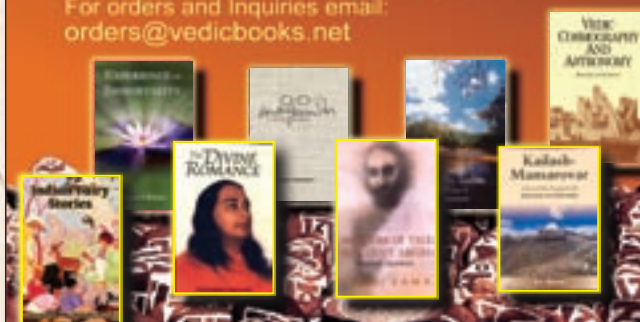
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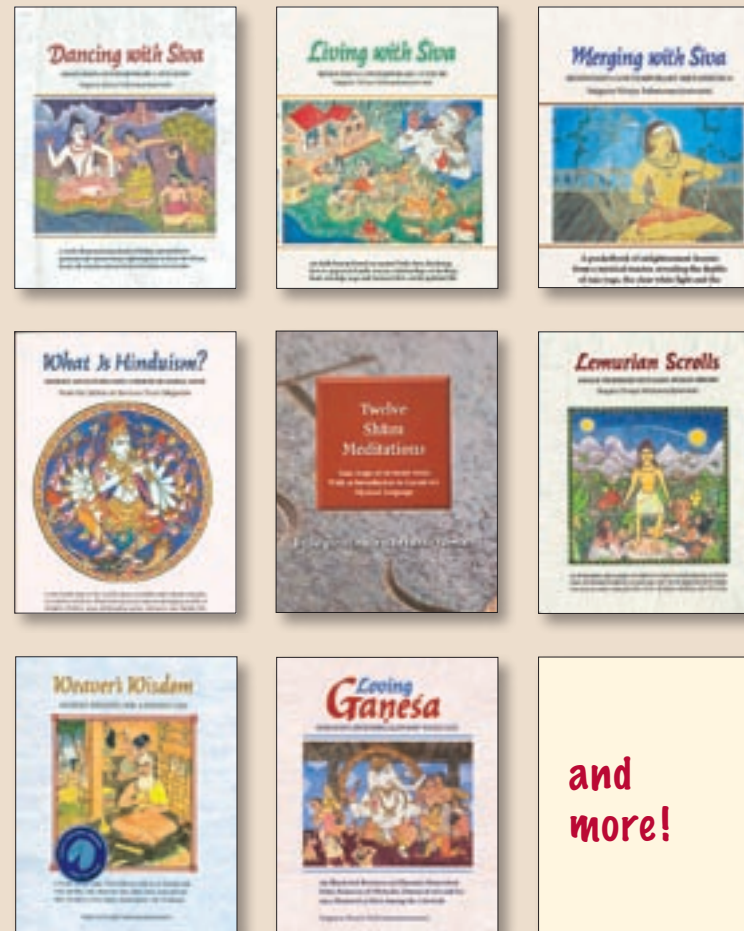
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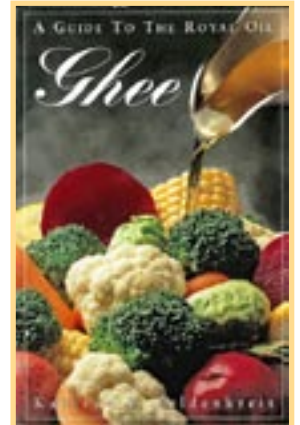
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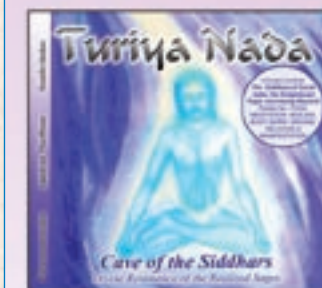
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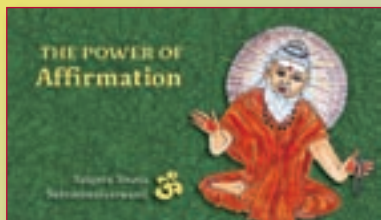
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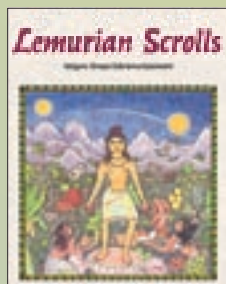
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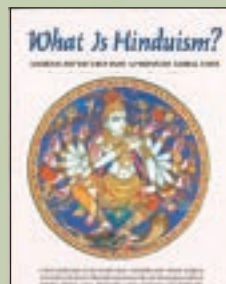
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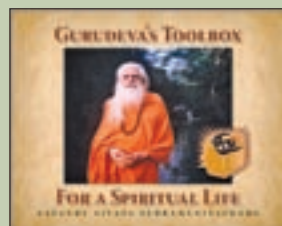
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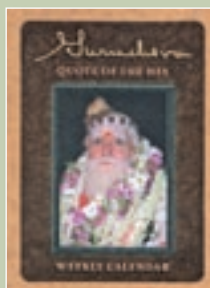
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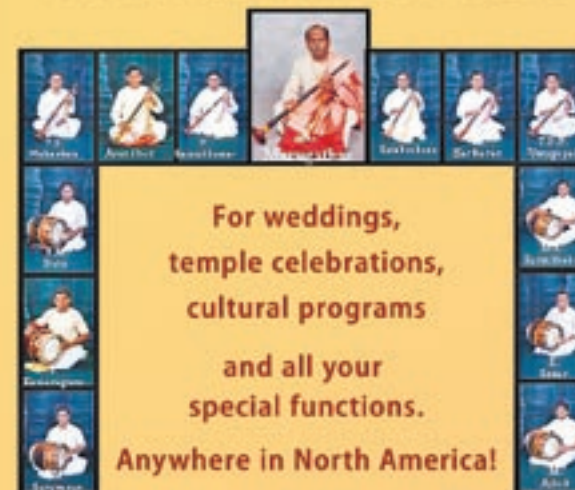
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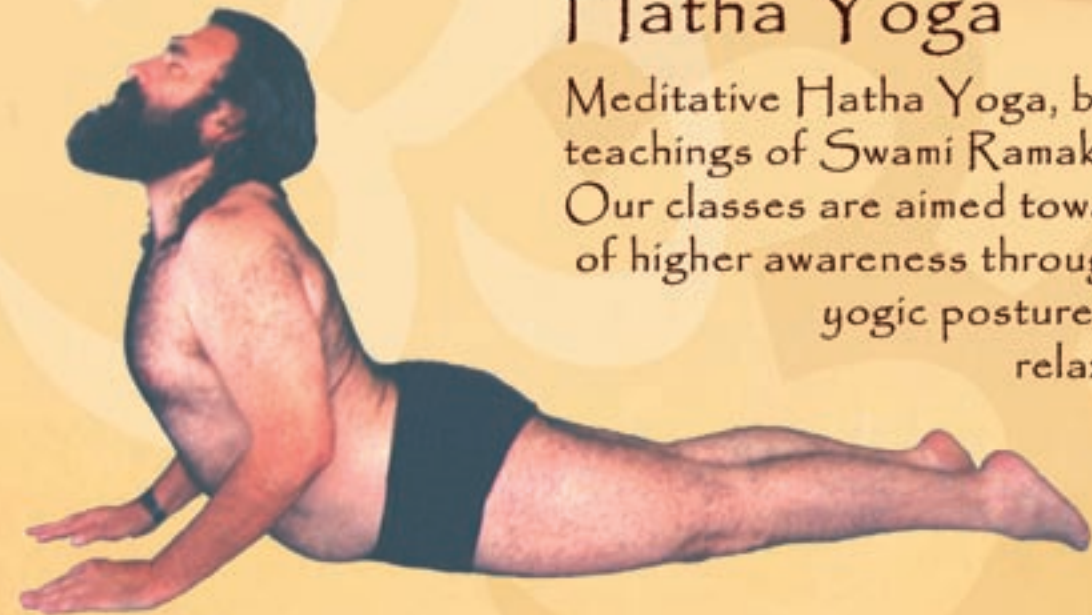
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